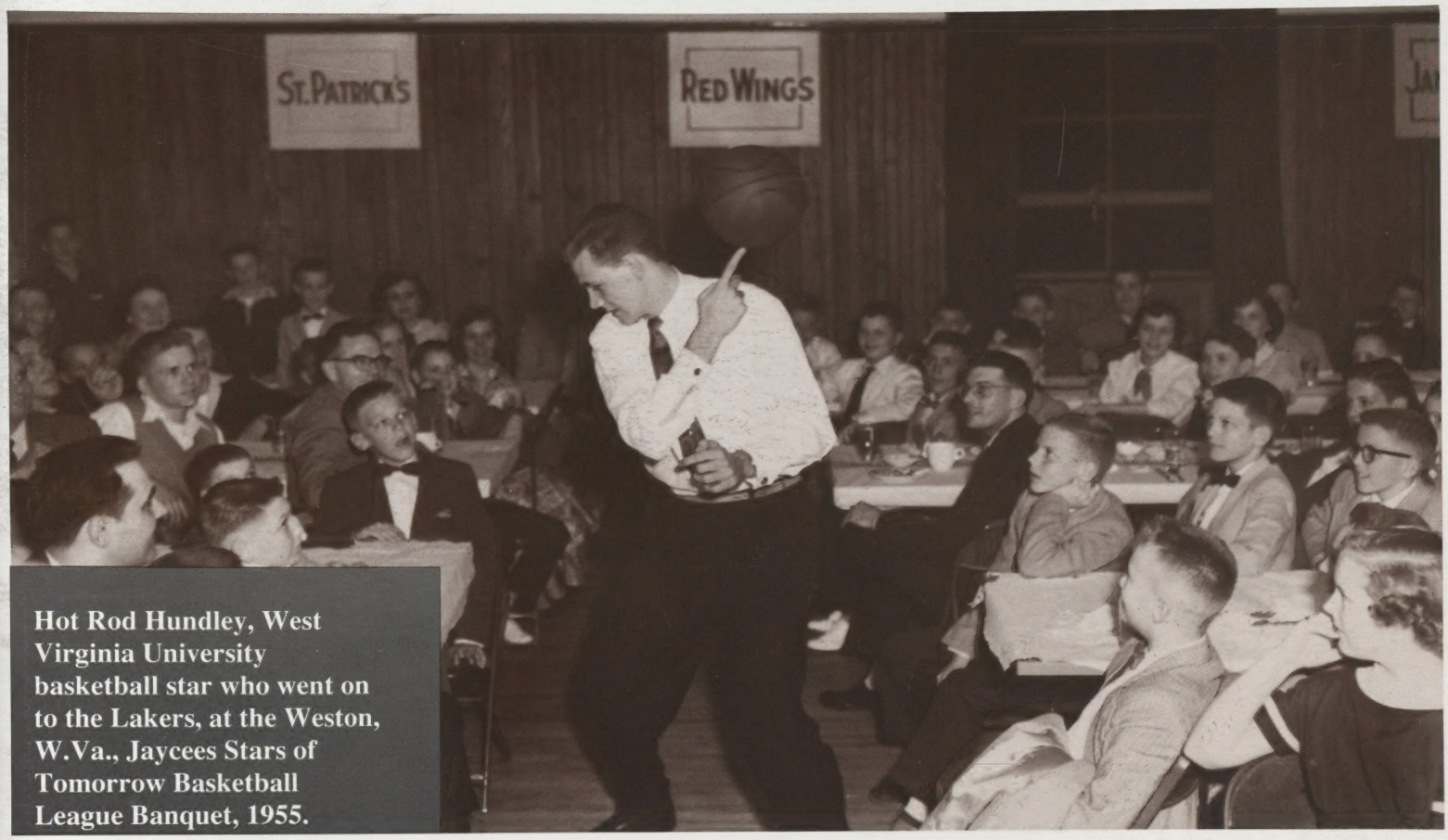
Jerry West • Sam Huff • Junior Johnson

NOW AND THEN

The Appalachian Magazine



Hot Rod Hundley, West Virginia University basketball star who went on to the Lakers, at the Weston, W.Va., Jaycees Stars of Tomorrow Basketball League Banquet, 1955.

Courtesy of Les Fury and Patrick Sloan

Sports in Appalachia

- **BERNIE BICKERSTAFF**
  from Harlan County to the Denver Nuggets
- **STOCK CAR RACING**
  an Appalachian invention
- **GENERAL NEYLAND**
  builder of a football dynasty
- **APPALACHIAN LEAGUE BASEBALL**
- **CAWOOD LEDFORD**
  the Voice of the Kentucky Wildcats
- **GREAT ATHLETES OF APPALACHIA**
  from Sam Snead to Mary Lou Retton
- **CAM HENDERSON**
  inventor of the zone defense

From Sabbath Sin to Gridiron Evangelism
Sports and Religion in Appalachia
by Robert J. Higgs

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services /Institute for Appalachian Affairs, East Tennessee State University

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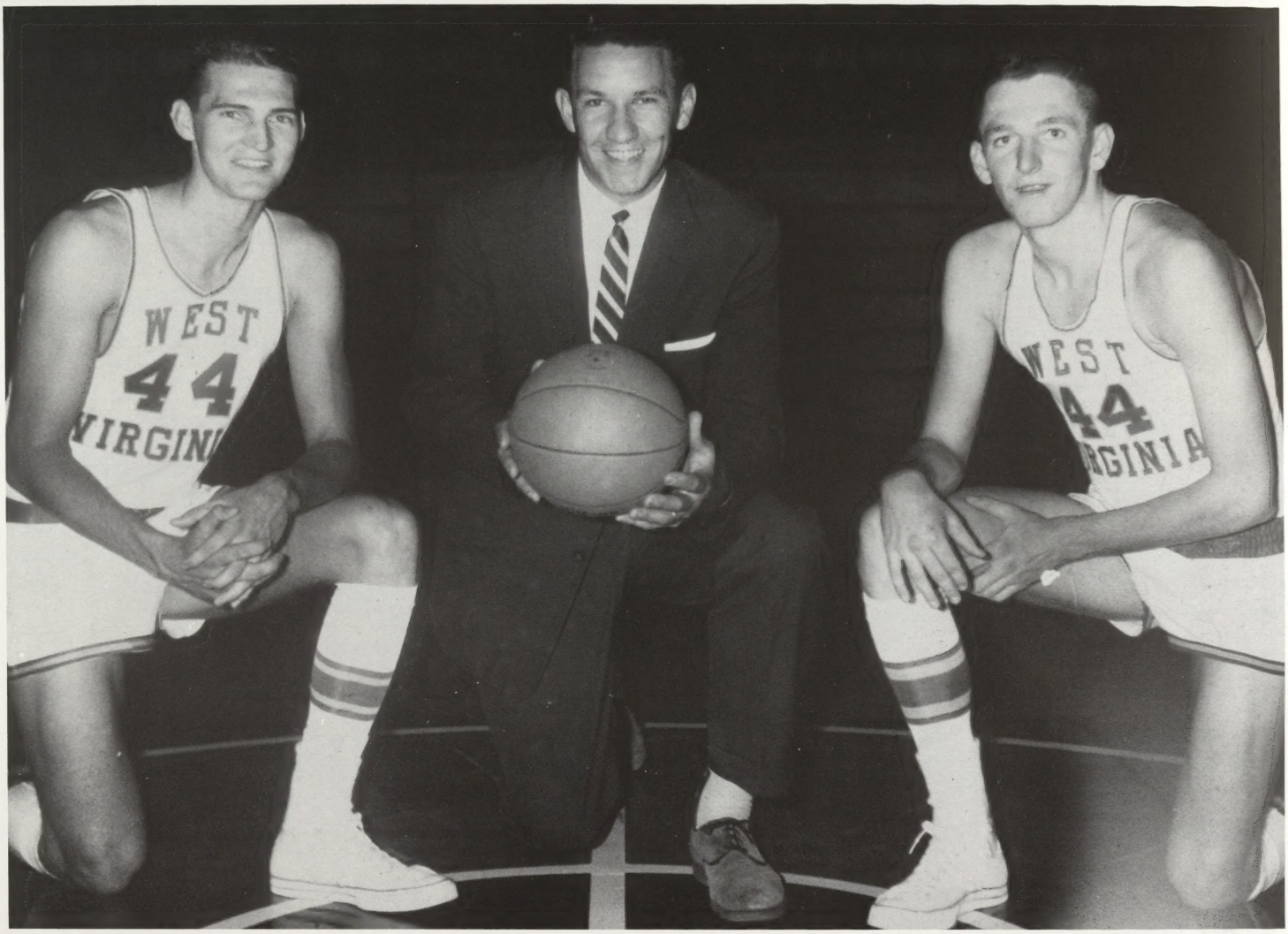
"Van Gentry wore 44. It was, of course, the number of Jerry West, of Rod Thorn. It was a number a good ballplayer would wear; it brought a kind of expectation. ... When the time came for the coach to give the uniforms out my first varsity season, I both wanted number 44 and knew I could not wear it."

—from "The Team We Got," memoir by Frank Soos, page 29



John Veasey

West Virginia University stars, 1960: (left to right) Senior Jerry West, who went on to the Los Angeles Lakers; coach Fred Schaus, who became the Lakers head coach; and freshman Rod Thorn, who went on to play for the Baltimore Bullets.

Fall 1992
Volume 9, Number 3

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I'd rather lead one lap and fall out of the race than stroke it and finish in the money. —*Junior Johnson*

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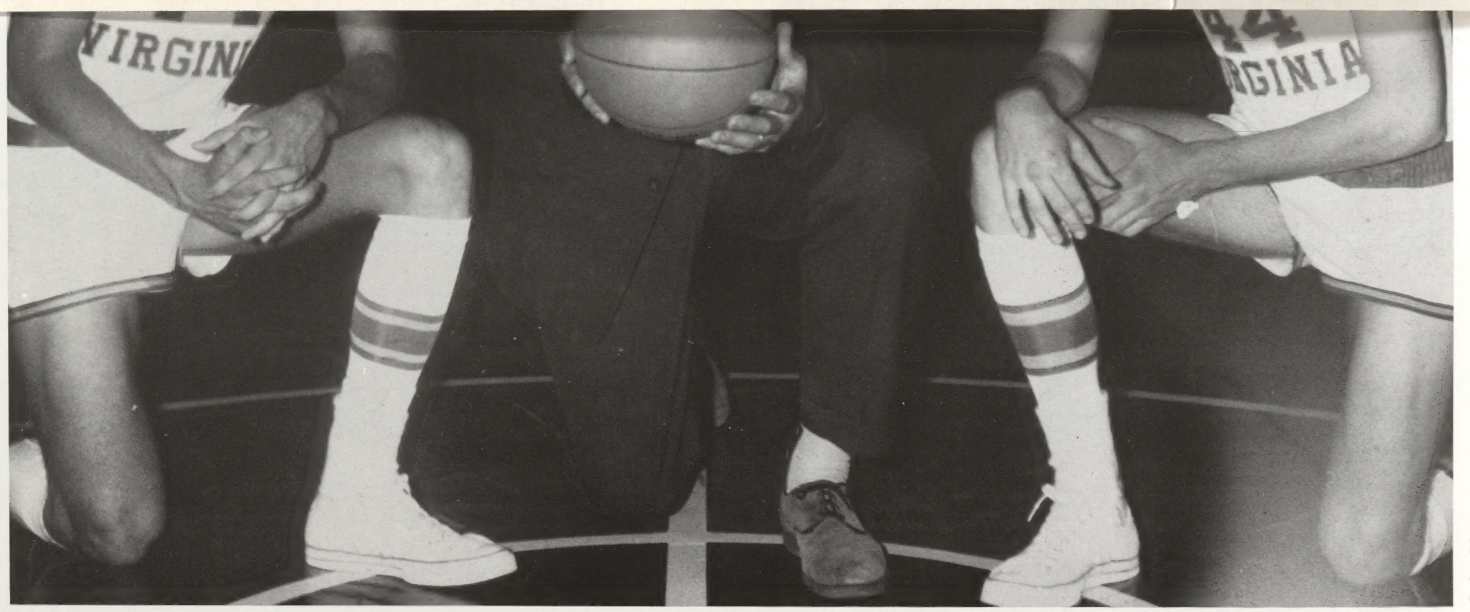

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Special thanks:
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Now and Then Magazine

A Non-Fan's Notes

If you're not a sports fan, don't go away. I'm not much of a sports fan myself, but I can assure you there are many things in this issue that you will find intriguing. This is because the writers in this special edition on sports in Appalachia are not just thinking about sports. They're commenting on the changes in our society, about personal challenges, about the grand dramas of life played out in a few hours. My friends who love athletic competition tell me, "Of course. That's what's so great about sports." It's generally not the watching of a game that makes these truths apparent to me. The writing in this issue does, however.

It was Jack (Robert J.) Higgs who pointed out to me why it might be important to talk about Appalachia and sports. Jack, who teaches English here, has been working on a book for a number of years called *God in the Stadium: The Triumph of Knighthood and the Heresy in American Sport.* And he's been thinking about the connection to Appalachia for years, too.

Jack was, I believe, the first to think about sports in regional terms (in his essay, "Sports and Play in Southern Appalachia: A Tentative Appraisal" in the *Proceedings of the 8th Annual Appalachian Studies Conference,* 1986). He has explored the subject further in an article for us on the development of organized sport in the region. Marie Tedesco's article on rookie league baseball also gives a sense of the changes in the Appalachian culture and its connection with the larger culture.

Basketball dominates this issue. Patrick Sloan, a psychologist at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Johnson City, is a native of West Virginia and a former college basketball player (Fairmont State) who once played a pickup game with one of the great stars of the game, Jerry West (also from West Virginia). We prevailed upon Pat to renew their acquaintance and ask some questions of West, who is now general manager of the Los Angeles Lakers basketball team. Pat also spoke to other West Virginians who have been part of the national sports scene, including football great Sam Huff.

From Frank Soos of Fairbanks, Alaska, came memories of his high school basketball years in Southwest Virginia. And we have a profile of Bernie Bickerstaff, the Denver Nuggets general manager who came from Harlan County, Ky.

Preoccupied though we were with basketball and other team sports, this issue would not be complete without something about our homegrown sport of stock car racing. We, like Tom Wolfe a few years ago, looked to Junior Johnson.

Altogether, we think we have provided an original look at sports in Appalachia. There was a lot of ground to cover. In fact, there was so much to talk about that we have added pages to this issue. Thanks to your contributions in response to our special plea last spring, we have been able to afford these pages. I thank you for your heartening support at a time when we needed it.

I would also like to thank Richard Blaustein, who has recently stepped down as director of the Center. He has become the Center's senior research fellow and is teaching a course in Appalachian society and culture in East Tennessee State University's sociology and anthropology department. Richard plans to continue working with the center and the magazine, and he is coordinating the university's new Appalachian Studies minor.

Richard's contributions are inestimable. As director of the center since1984, he worked with scholars, writers, musicians and others in the arts and humanities to develop many fine programs including recording projects, a radio program, concerts, publication of books, sponsoring of conferences, the Scottish-Appalachian program and *Now and Then* magazine. The magazine has become the Center's longest ongoing project. It was first published in 1984 by the Center with founding editor, ETSU English professor Fred Waage.

The center will be getting a new director in a few months, and I imagine we'll be exploring some new areas. Richard has helped shape many of our concepts about this region and has encouraged viewing it in all its complexity. I'm sure his influence will continue, and for that, I believe the center and the entire field of Appalachian Studies are richer.

—Pat Arnow

Carroll Reece Museum

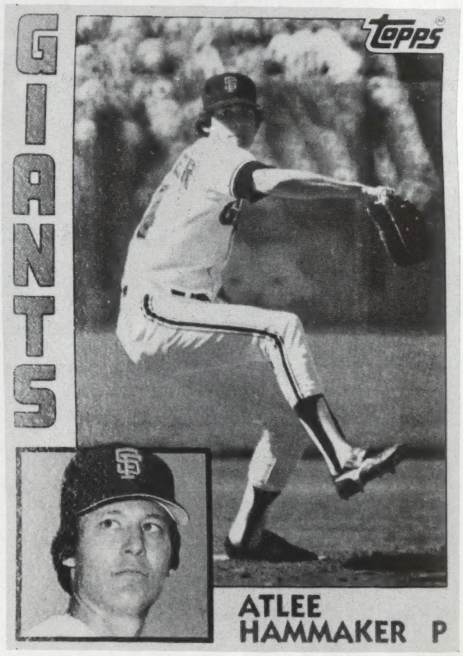
Preserving athletic history

From Native American game artifacts to organized collegiate sports equipment and memorabilia, the Reece Museum's permanent collection covers a wide array of sports and recreational items. Some of these articles came into the collection as early as the 1930s when the museum was housed in the library.

During East Tennessee State University's 75th anniversary year in 1986, the Reece launched a effort to broaden its collection of ETSU memorabilia. Through Bob Plummer, Associate Director of Alumni Relations, and Jerry Robertson, Head Athletics Trainer for Intercollegiate Athletics, important sports-related items have been added to our collection.

Robertson had collected items to help preserve the story of the program to which he has dedicated himself since the mid-1960s. Plummer suggested that the museum review the items that Robertson had accumulated. Robertson readily transferred several important pieces to the Reece collection.

Because of the commitment shown by



One of the Reece Museum's collection of 19 Atlee Hammaker baseball cards.

Picturing the teams

The first varsity football squad at Science Hill High School in Johnson City, Tenn., 1921. Left to right. Front: Welsford Arts, Bill Roper, Gerald Crowder, Lewis Roper, Harry Baker, William Preas, Joe Gilmer. Back: Howard Tipton, Earnest Thomas, Leslie Hart, Claiborne McCorkle, Lester Leonard, Raymond Long, Frank Clark. Photo made on the campus of East Tennessee State College.

Carroll Reece Museum (continued)

these two, the Reece collection now holds a multitude of items including:

- a football from the undefeated 1969 Ohio Valley Conference Championship team;
- a jug of dirt from the 50-yard line of the old ETSU football field, collected on November 21, 1971, prior to the construction of Memorial Center;
- a pair of Winfred King (1982-83 Southern Conference All-Tournament Team) basketball shoes (size 18);
- a "Pepper the Parrot" mascot uniform;
- a complete set of Atlee Hammaker baseball cards tracing the Bucs' ace pitcher through his major league career;
- 12 original 1988 drawings for ETSU football program covers by *Knoxville News-Sentinel* sports cartoonist Charles Daniel;
- a 1979-80 ETSU football promotion poster called the "Saturday Evening Game" by ETSU Associate Professor Clinton Moody;
- a 1980 Pirate Club decal;
- a Bucky spirit badge;
- a baseball uniform worn by Coach Jim Mooney.

Donors have also added a baseball championship trophy from 1915, a 1954 cheerleader sweater, memorabilia from the Bucs' own 1952 Burley Bowl, a hand-sewn pillow sporting the East Tennessee State Normal School logo and two 1976 All-American rifle medals.

These pieces are among the almost 10,000 items that comprise our permanent collection. Additional items rounding out the sports and recreation collection are a polo hat, Cherokee Indian ball sticks and chunky stones and a pair of antique ice skates, but it is the ETSU sports and recreation programs that we want to highlight. To preserve the athletics history is to preserve a facet of East Tennessee State University, and that is our mission at the Reece Museum.

— Helen Roseberry, Director

This picture and others of sports in the Johnson City area are available at the Archives of Appalachia. Photos of East Tennessee State University athletics are in the University Archives. For more information, write or call the archives at ETSU, Box 70665, Johnson City TN 37614.

Patrick Sloan

Great (by God) Athletes

West Virginians in sports talk about environment and destiny

The radio was the hearth around which our family and neighbors gathered on those stark, winter nights in the 1950s when Jack Fleming's voice dramatized the basketball adventures of "Hot" Rod Hundley, Jerry West and their West Virginia University Mountaineer teammates. They seemed to be playing for *us* as they marched through each Southern Conference season and on into national tournaments. I was permitted to stay up to listen, regardless of how late the game. In a close game, our hopes for victory soared when Coach Fred Schaus deployed mighty-mites Ronnie Retton and Bucky Bolyard to apply the tenacious zone press defense.

The adults, mostly men, often adopted a favorite player. Herb White, who was to be my first coach, liked Willie Akers from Mullens for his strong rebounding and durability. Young neighbor Bob Swiger chose sharpshooters like Jerry West and Paul Miller. The journalist, Bob Earle, chewed tobacco and listened intently. Charlie Stalnaker seemed mostly to like the company, as he consorted and laughed a lot. An avid fan, Mom held her own with the men. Dad favored Hot Rod and recounted stories about him even after West joined the team and was clearly on his way to superstardom.

We all liked Hot Rod because he was a unique character and a bona fide All-American — "one of *the* top five players in the whole country," as Hundley himself reminded me recently in a telephone interview. Remarkable in skill and showmanship, he could shoot, pass, ball-handle, dribble through and *with* his knees, lead cheers and tease opponents. He reminded Dad of Prewitt, the Appalachian soldier in *From Here to Eternity* who would not compromise his values under intense social pressure to be a boxer. Hot Rod also refused to do the expected at the expense of playing for fun or his individuality. Dad reveled in sophomore Hundley's balking on the verge of breaking the Southern Conference Tournament scoring record. With the game clinched, he wasted two free throws with seconds to play by shooting first behind his back, then a hook shot.

Hot Rod was like our own Paul Bunyan or Horatio Alger character, ascending from the poor side of his hometown of Charleston.

Hundley justifies such cavalier behavior now: "It's a game. I never took it or myself that seriously. I don't believe records make one person better or bigger than another one."

A few years ago, former referee John "Sheriff" Tiano of Clarksburg told how Hot Rod surprised him with an around-the-back, blind pass of the sort Earvin "Magic" Johnson later patented with the Los Angeles Lakers. The fast-break play to the basket always brought the fans to their feet at Mountaineer Field House as the home team raced down court with the ball ahead of their opponents. But this time Hundley had passed the ball to the referee. The fans and the opposing coach went berserk when Sheriff reflexively laid the ball in the hoop without breaking stride — or swallowing his whistle. He says with a wink, "What else could I do? It was a beautiful pass."

Hundley now takes himself seriously. Through sports, he says, "I bettered myself." He was the first player selected in the National Basketball Association draft in 1957 (for the Minneapolis Lakers). He was elected to the NBA All-Star team while in Minneapolis and again after the Lakers moved to Los Angeles. And, he points out, "I'm the only play-by-play announcer (Utah Jazz) in the NBA who ever played."

He sometimes feels he might have been even more successful if he had gotten more attention from his family. Although acknowledging Athletic Director Red Brown's fatherly influence at WVU, he states matter-of-factly, "I sort of raised myself, had no direction. I wasn't a very good student, lived in a hotel in high school. No one (family) cared about me — no one to get me up, push me to go to class to get a degree." Just 12 hours short of graduating, he has insisted his children complete college.

My parents sometimes took me to WVU games, and I saw Hot Rod dribble behind his back and between his legs. This was long before it was in vogue, at least in the mountains. (Bob Cousy, the Boston Celtic master ball-handler, played beyond our radio reception.) I sat in disbelief as he mocked the referees and launched looping hook shots from the far corners of the court in a close game with arch-rival Pitt.

Hot Rod was like our own Paul Bunyan or Horatio Alger character, ascending from the poor side of his hometown of Charleston. West Virginians adored him. Outsiders could call him a hillbilly or a hick, but his wizardry could make a rival player request a refund of

private school tuition, as Hundley's skills and antics often left star players from better-endowed schools shaking their heads in exasperation and incredulity. He made us feel good about ourselves, proud to be from the Mountain State, even if it was considered a poor or backward place.

We did not mistake his clowning for ignorance. He knew exactly what he was doing and where he was going. He and West were supported at WVU by a whole cast of small-town, local boys and a few players recruited from neighboring states whom we embraced as extended family, welcomed reinforcements against the real outsiders, such as New York University, Villanova or Florida State.

Jerry West's teammate, Ronnie Retton, says of that era, "Most of the guys were from West Virginia — Jerry was from Cabin Creek (Chelyan), Bucky Bolyard from Aurora; I was from Grant Town — we were really close. When we went on long road trips, we were West Virginians — closer knit."

Retton, after a few years of playing professional baseball in the New York Yankee farm system following college, returned to the Fairmont area to operate a coal mining cable business and raise five children, including Mary Lou, who won an Olympic gold medal in gymnastics in 1984. Her pluck and winning smile reminded many of us West Virginians of her father.

In close families, like many in West Virginia, leaving home to pursue athletic excellence takes a toll on everyone in the family. Ronnie Retton discussed his family's consternation at allowing daughter Mary Lou to move to Houston at age 14 to train with Bela Karolyi, the Romanian coach who defected to the United States. "She wanted to go, it seemed like a chance of a lifetime. We never dreamed it would turn out with her winning the gold medal, but we took a chance. She called several times, crying, wanting to come home. We went to Houston I don't know how many times, but she stuck it out. We had no way of knowing what would come after the Olympics, all the publicity, strangers coming to the house. We still get five or six letters a day, just fan mail for her."

My brother-in-law, Jimmy Priester, tells me he talked with Mary Lou recently while she was visiting Fairmont. He described her as genuinely friendly, "not uppity," traits admired by him and his Appalachian neighbors. I asked Ronnie Retton what advice an Appalachian father offered a future Olympic champion. He says, "I just told her the same thing I told all five of my kids: sports is like everything else in life, you get out of it what you put into it. Be dedicated. Always put into it your best."

Whatever Appalachian values Hot Rod Hundley personified with his flair, Jerry West exemplified by stoic single-mindedness and determination, not to mention "fair" talent, as mountaineers wryly called it. Hundley's Kanawha Valley successor to the title of the state's greatest player, West is now enshrined in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. It is his profile that makes up the NBA logo of a dribbling player. He is former coach and current general manager of the Los Angeles Lakers, the team for which he played (from 1960 - 1974). West expanded our horizons as WVU games began to be televised. The Mountaineers were surging into national prominence with a number-one ranking and notoriety in the wake of Hundley in basketball and Sam Huff and Chuck Howley in football.

Collegian West seemed only slightly less embarrassed than I was as I stood before him at age 12 in the kitchen of my friend Jim Kane, whose sister he was dating and would marry. Next to Jim, I was the second luckiest kid in West Virginia that summer day, but I was so excited I was speechless, and my stomach flip-flopped. Jerry seemed to sense my discomfort, so we went outside and passed baseball.

The following year, when West returned to Weston, Jim and I played two-on-one basketball against him. We used my neighbor's dirt court at West's request because it would be secluded from gawking crowds. Here I had played hundreds of imaginary one-on-one games by myself, pretending I was alternately West and Oscar Robertson, two premier players of their day.

I could hardly believe he was there, playing with us. I remember his serious intensity and how he remained patient

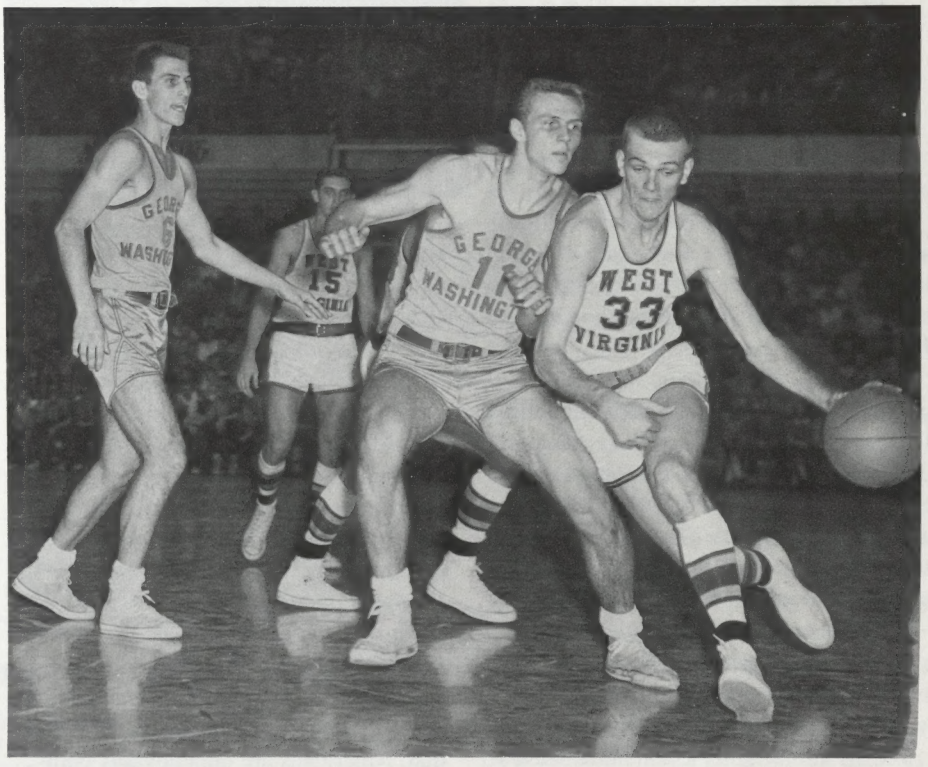


photo loaned by John Veasey of the Fairmont ***Times-West Virginian***

Hot Rod Hundley handles the ball, 1955-56 season. This was WVU *Atheneum* photgrapher John Veasey's first sports photo and a first-place winner in the West Virginia Press Association contest.

with our horsing around. He taught me how to make a quick step past a defender that day, and that maneuver later helped me earn a scholarship to Fairmont State. I fantasized myself immortalized in his eyes because I scrambled eagerly into the creek after a loose ball, and he complimented my desire. He mentioned the "dive" some years later, making me feel special, memorable, competent.

In a telephone interview, he says he still recalls that day. He says, "It's nice to hear things that might have been positive for some kid. That means a lot to me."

Jerry West remembers, "When I went to West Virginia University in Morgantown, my goodness, it was like I was in Los Angeles. It was so big, I thought."

Perhaps it is our common roots that allows me to call him now, over 30 years later. But when the voice on the telephone says, "Jerry West," my stomach is back in Jim's kitchen.

He says, "Growing up in West Virginia had a tremendous impact on my life. I try to go back every year, just to slow down a little bit. What I miss most are the congenial people. There's a serenity about West Virginia. I'm not a very good sleeper — but when I go there, I can sleep."

West grew up near Charleston, the state's largest city and capital, in the heavily industrialized Kanawha River valley, but he says, "I certainly didn't view myself as a city kid at all because I never went to the city. Chelyan was only 14 miles from Charleston, but we did not have a car, so it really wasn't accessible to me. If I would go, it would be by bus with my parents for an hour or two, and not very often."

He was homesick in his first two years of college. "I had a terribly difficult time adjusting to living on a university campus, was homesick for a town of 800 people. I had been a very good student in high school, raised in a family of very good students, but I couldn't concentrate on school because I missed being home. I was unbelievably shy. When I went to West Virginia University in Morgantown, my goodness, it was like I was in Los

Angeles. It was so big, I thought. When I went from Morgantown to Los Angeles, I couldn't even believe the culture shock that was here in store for me. I had not changed a lot at that time. Dealing with the press was hard for me. I always felt so guarded for fear I would say the wrong thing."

He is known for his humility, work ethic and leadership. These values, West believes, came from his family and extended family. "I had a large family that depended upon each other for support, along with the same types of people in my neighborhood. These were the factors that made me feel secure. When you get out in the business world, you don't see that. Americans are unbelievably competitive. One thing I learned by living in West Virginia is to treat people the way I want to be treated."

Richard Hoffer in a *Sports Illustrated* article described West as self-critical, gloomy, superstitious and uncommunicative with his family after a lost game. I asked if this characterization fit part of an Appalachian stereotype of stoicism, fatalism and superstition. First West set the record straight. "As far as not speaking to my family for weeks, that's simply not true. There were times I wanted to be left alone so I could concentrate on what I needed to do."

Cultural factors had little to do with his makeup, he believes. His personality came out of his individual character. "Growing up it seemed I was angry at everything. Even though outwardly I was not, inwardly I was." He admits he is neither optimistic nor especially confident. That is what makes him competitive, he believes. "I really think that in some respects that's a blessing. It pushes you, makes you want to excel more, and you won't give in. I like to win."

This attitude has not made it easy for West. He frequently played the role of giant killer in tournament play, both at WVU and with the Lakers. The Mountaineers lost the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Championship by one point in 1958-59, and the Lakers lost the NBA finals to the Boston Celtics multiple times in the 1960s. "If I didn't play to my absolute maximum every night, there was a good chance we were going to lose. I felt terrible if I left the floor and had anything left in me."

West's team finally won an NBA championship in the 1971-1972 season over the New York Knicks. West says, "Since I've been here (with the Lakers) as general manager, we've had a couple of teams that couldn't lose unless something awful happened. I never played on a team like that here. Most of the teams I played on weren't perfect. It's really amazing, the enormous pain it causes to lose the championship after you play a successful NBA season."

Like West's Mountaineers in 1959-60, our Fairmont State Fighting Falcons in 1968 came up short in the national championship game. We lost by three points in the final game of the small college National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Because of my disappointment, I was surprised at the

sight of jubilant supporters on our return to Fairmont. It was mostly family and friends, but their reaction reassured me and restored my sense of community.

My coach at Fairmont State, Joe Retton, was Ronnie's elder cousin and also a native of Grant Town. Joe, himself an outstanding baseball player, became an exceptionally successful college basketball coach. He is a member of the NAIA Hall of Fame for being selected coach of the year an unprecedented two times and having his Fairmont State teams qualify for the national tournament 12 of his 19 coaching years.

Known for getting the most out of his local, small-town players, Joe Retton had won 85 percent of his games, highest among active college coaches, when he retired in 1985. I asked him recently how one meshes fierce individualism with the need for play and teamwork inherent in team sports. He says, "Our players could not wait for practice. It was fun, everyone working toward the same goal. Each player has a role, even the guys on the bench. There are differences in talent, but it must be a team concept. Then everyone belongs"— just as it is in a well-adjusted family, he and I agreed. He adds, "In all the things I've ever said to a kid, on the floor or off, I never did something that I didn't have the team at heart. We talked about life, not just basketball. You become a part of people."

Joe Retton's father immigrated to West Virginia from Italy as a teenager, already an accomplished coal miner. Retton says of his youth in post-Depression Grant Town, "We made play out of everything, didn't need television or parks. We taped rags for balls, used broomsticks for bats, played and competed. We were learning how to survive. Baseball was such a part of our community, learning how to be successful, it projected into other areas of life as well."

John Veasey

Coach Joe Retton with players Bill Moody (left), John Jamerson (middle) and Pat Sloan, 1969.

I asked my former coach what traits characterize the mountain athlete. He said, "We weren't too big for the game. You have to be consistent, respect each other, and it's up to the coach to help show the players what it is to be a good citizen. Raised in the coal mining camp, we had to fight, dig and scratch to survive. Our parents and neighbors taught us how to work and to love, how to say and show, 'I care.' I won't say these things are unique to us, but they're a part of us."

One teammate at Fairmont State, Dave Gardner, was from one of a handful of black families in Weston. He recalls the importance of feeling like a full member of the team and being treated "like everybody else" by Coach Joe Retton.

Gardner believes the strict fairness and consistent discipline were crucial to our team's success and to his ability to confront problems in his own life later on. Another teammate, John Jamerson, transferred to Fairmont State to play for Retton and became an NAIA All-American. Now himself the father of an NBA player (Houston Rockets' Dave Jamerson), he recalls Coach Retton's fatherly care for his team-family and knowledge of how to win.

Jamerson was from a Midwestern city and our only out-of-state player. Of his mountain teammates, he says, "People from the small towns sacrificed themselves for the team. Big city guys, the big stars want to be the center of attention. Our guys on the bench cheered for us, kept us going. The townspeople cared more for me, weren't concerned with themselves, would invite me to join them. Everyone was for me because I could help the team. You don't find that as much in the city."

Under Retton's tutelage I became part of a highly successful team and was able to see beyond the mountains in many respects. My first airplane ride was to the NAIA tournament in Kansas City in 1968. A teammate from the coalfields was terrified to look out the plane's window; another from a neighboring coal town was unmoved, showing me that one's environment is not necessarily one's destiny. As I reflected on it re-

Coach Joe Retton remembers post-Depression Grant Town: "We taped rags for balls, used broomsticks for bats, played and competed. We were learning how to survive."

cently, I wondered why some West Virginians leave the mountains, and others do not. Given that perhaps the most famous West Virginia football player from that era, Sam Huff, was raised in a coal camp near Fairmont, I called and asked his opinion.

Huff, the Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker (New York Giants and Washington Redskins) and now Vice President of Special Markets for Marriott Hotels in Washington, D.C., was raised in Farmington (Number Nine coal camp), where a mine explosion in 1968 buried some of his relatives among the 78 miners who died. His manner has been described as bombastic, but I see it as mountaineer candor without dressing. In our telephone conversation he was personal and introspective. He says, "The New York Giants drafted me out of WVU to be part of a team. That's different than my brother, a coal miner, going to New York and getting a job. It's easy for me or somebody to say, 'Go to New York, Chicago, and get a job.' But for him to leave his culture, have no relatives there, no ties, it's too much to expect.

"Being part of a team is the greatest experience you can have. When you're in the huddle, that's the 'comfort zone.' It doesn't matter if you're black or white, Italian or Polish, you remember the value of cooperation. Teammates are friends for life, like family."

John "Sheriff" Tiano. This referee brought the fans to their feet when he caught a pass from Hot Rod Hundley and laid it in the basket during a Mountaineer game.

Huff's father was a coal miner. One of seven children, Huff says, "Growing up in Number Nine taught me to be tough, not afraid of work, good work habits, basics that people in the city don't have. My father taught me how to survive in the outdoors, fish, hunt, change tires and oil. My own son doesn't know some of these things we took for granted. He can operate a computer but can't change a tire. Appalachian people know how to survive."

Huff made it to New York, went beyond the mountains and is surviving quite well. But his experience is not common. He says, "I took my 32 year-old son back to Farmington recently. My brothers and friends talk about when the mines reopen, they'll be the first to be called back. They can do anything with their hands: fix a car, build an engine — anything — but they won't leave. So they survive day-to-day. It's their 'comfort zone.' It's hard to change a culture. I'd love to be there, but I can't do what I do there."

"My brothers talk about when the mines reopen, they'll be the first to be called back. They won't leave. So they survive day-to-day," says Sam Huff.

My father-in-law, Jim Priester, was reared in Number Nine a few years before Huff and preceded him in playing football at WVU. As a former player, coach and college teacher, he has observed most of the local athletes who have come and gone since his playing days at Mountaineer Field. He cites the uniqueness of the environment and of certain individuals as factors in the development of mountain athletes. He says, "Deprivation sometimes seems to motivate those who have the mettle for it. Both Sam and Jerry were combative in their own way, persevering, persistent. Sam was more outspoken. He'd hit anything that moved. Jerry had quiet intensity, but both wanted to get to the top. Jerry reminded me of Stan Musial (the Baseball Hall of Fame member from the St. Louis Cardinals), delicate but very competent. In any sport, I have never seen a more courageous player in my life than Jerry West, playing hurt with a broken nose, over and over again."

The Mountaineers are long-departed from the Southern Conference, and Dad, Herb and Charlie have passed on. Mom still attends local high school and college games, often joining some of our sports friends and high school heroes of mine — Truman Wyant, Dale White, Butch and Sonny Thoms — and she travels to Morgantown to Mountaineers' home games with a group of old friends. Sports offer a sense of continuity for her and the community, a nearly completed circle of people, time and events in a common experience of feelings and history.

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From Sabbath Sin to Gridiron Evangelism

Sports and Religion in Southern Appalachia

Robert J. Higgs

Something has happened to sports since the time of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. Sports have moved from simplicity, spontaneity and naturalness to complexity, organization and contrivance. Once regarded as sinful, especially on the Sabbath, sports in the 20th century have become symbols of faith and martial valor as well as major economic enterprises. This is true in Appalachia as elsewhere.

"Sporting was the lifeblood of the frontier," wrote historian Thomas D. Clark. Sports in early settlement days did not require extensive practice or training but often a display of considerable strength and skill. Among these, said Clark, were leapfrog (high over the head), foot races, wrestling and the throwing of shoulder stones, tomahawks, knives or cannonballs — sometimes, said another historian, David H. Fischer, at each other. The most exciting sports, said Clark (in *The Rampaging Frontier: Manners and Humors in the South and the Middle West)*, were bear baiting, dog fighting and gander-pulling. The most controversial was the "rough and tumble," a free-for-all by two contestants (usually male but occasionally female) in which anything and everything was permitted, including biting, pulling hair and gouging out opponents' eyes with specially prepared nails.

In *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America,* Fischer cited statutes passed in Virginia against maiming in 1748 and in 1772 against gouging, biting, kicking or stomping. But there is the distinct possibility that observers greatly exaggerated their descriptions of "rough and tumble." For the most part impromptu boxing and wrestling matches seemed to end without permanent physical damage or even unkind feelings. In *The Overmountain Men*, Pat Alderman described frontier fights as festive occasions: "two men spoiling for a fight would strip to the waist and square off." They "would exchange blows until one . . . was down or would holler 'Take him off.' The two fighters would shake hands, go down to the river and wash up, and then empty a demijohn together."

This is not to argue that sporting competition in the region was not frequently brutal. It does suggest that the ferocity of accounts may have been exaggerated for dramatic or even political reasons, as seems the case with aristocratic observers, especially the British, who wanted to show how uncivilized some frontier folk were. Exaggeration was virtually a requirement for any kind of reporting of frontier sports as might be suspected from the following account reported by Clark: "Squirrel hunting was a grand sport — not that frontiersmen wanted the squirrels to eat. Frequent notices appeared in the early newspapers announcing squirrel hunts, and later these same papers announced the results. The *Kentucky Gazette* gave notice on May 17, 1796, that 'On Saturday last, the Hunters rendezvoused at Irvine's Lick and produced *Seven Thousand Nine Hundred and Forty-one* Squirrels killed by them in one day.' "

While the exaggeration in the episode is obvious, the sense of waste, like that in Crockett's story of killing of 105 bears in less than a year, is disturbing, presaging as it does the conspicuous destruction of flora and fauna in our own day.

One cannot look either at religion or sports in the 19th century without considering the other. The profanation of the Sabbath in which frontier sports and rough amusements figured so prominently, along with drunkenness which had reached epidemic proportions, became a symbol of the evil the early churches sought to confront. All kinds of clever devices were employed for enforcing rules among the poor and illiterate, especially slaves. In *Fisher's River* (North Carolina) *Sketches and Characters* (1859) by Hardin E. Taliaferro, a slave is welded to the river bank after wetting a line to fish on Sunday. The sentences for sporting violation of the Sabbath were always severe, often final and were not limited to punishment of slaves.

Peter Cartwright, the famous Methodist evangelist, was not exaggerating when he described Logan County, Ky., where his father had lived, as "Rogue's Harbor," for "refugees from all parts of the Union had fled there . . . to escape justice or punishment." Here "murderers, horse thieves, highway robbers, and counterfeiters . . . put all law at defiance." Sunday, said

The most controversial backcountry sport was "rough and tumble," a free-for-all by two contestants in which anything and everything was permitted, including biting, pulling hair and gouging out opponents' eyes with specially prepared nails.

Sabbath Sin

Cartwright, "was a day set apart for hunting, fishing, horse-racing, card-playing, balls, dances, and all kinds of jollity and mirth." H.L. Mencken and Thomas Babington Macaulay would say that it was the jollity and mirth that really irritated the evangelists, but in any event Logan County in the Cumberland country was widely regarded as the devil's own headquarters. It was here that Protestantism would strike with all the forces at its command.

The primary method of attack that the churches settled on was the camp meeting, which did not originate in America but which Americans perfected. The climate, the lack of buildings, and the sparseness of the population over a vast area made the camp meeting a natural means for spreading the gospel.

In England camp meetings were tame and well-scrubbed affairs, but in the United States the meetings were not nearly so subdued, decorous or formal. They started on Thursday and Friday and lasted until the following Tuesday. From as far as a hundred miles around, people would come, sometimes by the thousands, especially if the prospect of vigorous preaching was in store, which was usually the case. Those attending camped in covered wagons or under the trees on the grounds. Preaching and praying and singing and shouting could be heard at all hours of the day and night, excepting for a period before dawn. Not all the activity, however, was religious, as historian James Leyburn has observed: "Adolescents were frequently among the affected [by the religious frenzy]; it was therefore necessary to post guards to prevent young couples from wandering into the woods. Women threw themselves on the ground in suggestive postures, tore open their clothes, hugged and kissed everyone within reach. Those who carried out the victims were filled sometimes with a passion not strictly religious. It has been suggested that at the camp meetings more souls were begotten than saved.

"The stalls and store which were set up around the grounds frequently sold whiskey. It found ready purchasers, not only among the scoffing rowdies, but even among the faithful. Friction occurred between the religious and non-religious elements, sometimes ending in a free-for-all fight. The Westerner, even when religious, was not docile, and did not consider seriously the admonition to 'turn the other cheek.'"

Here was a classic contest between the free, independent Celtic spirit and the stern Puritanism that forbade drinking, fighting, gambling and all sports on Sunday. It was like a collision of an immovable object with an unstoppable force. The result was not a clear-cut victory for either side, but a merging of interests in which the church eventually dropped all opposition to Sunday amusements, even violent sports, in exchange for tribute of those who loved to play.

The churches actually had no intention of stomping out sports; the goal was to bring them under control and even to use them as a means of proselytism. Manliness and the ability to adapt to unexpected challenges were widely admired, especially in ministers. Once when a young minister named Bascom saw all the men in his Kentucky congregation rise simultaneously to chase a bear that had just run by the meeting house, he himself joined in the chase and soon was ahead of all his people and not far behind the dogs. When the congregants killed the bear, he returned to the house with the others and gave an "uncommonly good sermon," reported William Brownlow Posey in *Development of Methodism.*

So taken were frontiersmen with competition that any preacher displaying a sporting spirit was apt to be warmly received. By mid century, says Thomas D. Clark, "there were more enterprising and sporting clergymen on the frontier than those preachers who used homely terms to catch the attention of backwoods listeners." The Reverend Blaney was one of these as seen in the announcement for his services: "The reverend Mr. Blaney will preach next Sunday in Dempsey's Grove, at ten A.M. and at four o'clock P.M., Providence permitting. Between services the preacher will run his sorrel mare, Julia, against any nag that can be trotted out in this region for a purse of five hundred dollars!" The purse was made, and Julia, amid deafening shouts, won the day. Not only did the congregation stay for the afternoon services, but some 200 joined the church: some from sincerity, some from the excitement of the day and some because the preacher was "a damned good fellow!" With ministers themselves now leading the assault on the Sabbath by engaging in horse racing, the Sabbath as a day of sanctity was endangered. Both the church and sinners were winning together.

Those writing about the Southern mountains in the early part of this century believed that more control and organization were still needed than what the churches had been able to provide. The children, said Horace Kephart in 1913, "play few games, but rather frisk about like young colts without aim or method."

"The young people of the mountains," wrote John C. Campbell in 1921, "as a whole do not know how to play." Even when they did play, he said, they wished passionately to win and were inclined to take whatever means necessary to reach a goal. What was missing, said Campbell, in addition to sportsmanship, was organization. "The Young Men's and the Young Women's Christian Associations might also find a special field for service in supplying and stimulating recreation. . . . There must be definite fostering and supervision, and in places a traditional and religious opposition must be overcome, sympathetically and tactfully."

In 1830 U.S. Congressional representative Davy Crockett had introduced a bill in the Congress to abolish West Point because of his fear of a "military nobility." Had he lived to a ripe old age, he would have seen the cloning of that august institution in his native East Tennessee.

The YMCA had already invaded East Tennessee, a fact probably not lost on Campbell. The "Y" made its first appearance at the University of Tennessee in 1877 to assist in counteracting the general impression among the public that East Tennessee University, as it was called then, was not only nonsectarian but a "'godless' institution." Soon, it was said, the organization was exerting a "happy influence on the students," cultivating among them "a healthy moral tone," wrote Stanley J. Folmsbee in his history of the university.

Wherever the YMCA appeared on American campuses in the years between the Civil War and World War I, there was the rapid development of organized sports, a shift, in Roger Caillois' terms, from "turbulence to rules" or from unorganized play into structured competition (from *Man, Play, and Games*, published in 1961).

In the late 1870s the Knoxville, Tenn., campus also became militarized under the provisions of the Merrill Land Grant Act of 1862. According to Folmsbee, "the whole school was under military discipline similar to that in effect at West Point." In 1830 U.S. Congressional representative Davy Crockett had introduced a bill in the Congress to abolish West Point because of his fear of a "military nobility." Had he lived to a ripe old age, he would have seen the cloning of that august institution in his native East Tennessee.

The basic idea behind the drive for organization was the acculturation theory, which was designed to illustrate to the floods of refugees arriving into New York the values of team play, competition and capitalism. In the case of the YMCA, the goal was to extend those same values to the great unwashed in the hills and hinterland. The method of acculturation shifted from intellectual to athletic.

After the revolution the great Eastern colleges had sent out highly educated preachers to the heartland. Before 1825 Princeton virtually educated the South. Among the educators was Samuel Doak (Princeton 1775), founder of Washington College. After the Civil War, when emphasis in the Eastern colleges began to shift to engineering and sports, the missionaries became football coaches with ties to the YMCA. In his 1974 University of Chicago dissertation, Robert Lester identified over 200 of these "Eastern College Evangelists of the Gridiron Gospel."

It is not correct to say that the cure of organized, militaristic sport was worse than the ailment of turbulent, often violent pastimes. However, the result of the new alliance of religion and sports presented a new set of problems from another direction with which we're still struggling today. The problems are well illustrated in the careers of two of America's greatest coaches, one who came from Appalachia and the other who came to it. The native was Fielding H. "Hurry Up" Yost (1871-1946) who was born in Fairview, W.Va., and who was himself one of "the Eastern College Evangelists of the Gridiron Gospel."

The church eventually dropped all opposition to Sunday amusements, even violent sports, in exchange for tribute of those who loved to play.

Yost attended Fairmont, W. Va., Normal School, Ohio Normal in Ada, and, attracted by lucrative possibilities in petroleum law, attended West Virginia University law school from which he graduated in 1897. Having played the newly developing game of football in Ohio, Yost took a coaching position at Ohio Wesleyan and then Nebraska (1898), Kansas (1899) and Stanford (1900), winning the conference championship at each school. In 1901 he went to the University of Michigan as head coach and remained there for the rest of his life. He was head coach until 1923 and again from 1925-1927, and he served as director of intercollegiate athletics from 1921-1941. His overall record at Michigan was 165-29-11. His teams remained undefeated eight times, and eight times won the Western Conference, commonly called the Big Ten. Most remarkable were his "point-a-minute" teams from 1901-1905 which averaged 49.8 points per game to 0.7 for their opponents in 55 games played.

Noted for running up the score on opponents, Yost's most lopsided victory came at the expense of his alma mater, West Virginia University, 130-0 in 1904. Thereafter Yost carried a yellowed clipping of the game in which West Virginia players spoke as if they had been invaded by Martians instead of Wolverines. With "gurgling satisfaction" Yost liked to read from the clipping which was itself a sort of Appalachian tall tale: "It is declared that every player on Yost's team weighed eight tons and had an average speed of 96 miles per hour. They breathed forth smoke and flames."

According to Larry Merchant in . . . *And Every Day You Take Another Bite*, it was Yost, rather than Vince Lombardi or Paul "Bear" Bryant, who gave us "winning is not the most important thing; it is the only thing." Think of it. This man, born in a log cabin in West Virginia, built at Ann Arbor "the largest collegiate athletic enterprise in America," according to the *Biographical Dictionary of America*, including the Yost Field House and Michigan Stadium, which became the largest in the nation.

Yost not only made the big score respectable, he sanctified it. The coach at Dobyns-Bennett High School in Kingsport, Tenn., in 1929, when Bobby Dodd was quarterback, was following Yost's example in beating Norton, Va., 128-0, a fact inscribed on a plaque in honor of Dodd at the Tri-Cities Airport. So was John Heisman following the lead, when in 1916, his Georgia Tech team beat little Cumberland University of Lebanon, Tenn., 220-0, possibly in revenge for a loss to Cumberland in baseball 22-0 the previous spring. Heisman, also a gridiron evangelist fond of drawing metaphors from war, threatened Cumberland with a lawsuit if it didn't show up for the football game. All Cumberland had to do when it gave up football in 1949, said one Tennessee wag, was to let the air out of the ball. In 1990 Cumberland took to the field again ready, no doubt, to do unto others, should the occasion ever present itself, what was notoriously done to it.

Running up the score in the attempt at national ranking has become part of the American sports scene, with church schools such as Brigham Young as guilty in this regard as state colleges. Wake Forest University has been trounced so often by "national powers" that some disgruntled alumni reportedly changed a road sign near Winston-Salem to read, "U.S. Interstate 85 - Wake Forest 0."

It was Yost, a man born in a log cabin in West Virginia, who gave us "winning is not the most important thing; it is the only thing."

Yost often drew parallels between war and football and cited moral and religious reasons for his approach to coaching. He liked to re-fight the battle of Waterloo, and his acquaintances considered him an authority on Western front maneuvers in World War I. He preceded skull practices with a 20-minute lecture on military strategy, readying dispatches from the front and making predictions about the outcome with, it was said, uncanny success. He was also fond of lecturing on "football's four cornerstones of success," "brains, heart, courage, and character." "Yost claimed that his job gave him a 'pulpit' from which to preach his message of football as a 'sanctified instrument for the good,'" reported Robin Lester in his University of Chicago dissertation. Opposed to smoking, drinking and swearing, he was widely hailed as a moral force. Said Frank Murphy, Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, "Fielding H. Yost has done more to inculcate high ideals of clean, Christian living in the minds of Michigan students than any other one man." When Yost died, "his funeral service was an appropriate conclusion to his life." Boy Scouts formed a color guard, politicians and All-Americans served as pallbearers, and his fraternity brothers sang his favorite song, "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi," said Lester.

In spite of Yost's success, he was controversial. Until 1921, as Lester pointed out, Yost worked only 10 weeks for which he was paid more than an annual salary of a full professor. During the rest of each year, Yost pursued a profitable career in business, seeking out natural resource deposits for development companies, selling oil and gas leases and supervising the construction of a hydroelectric plant in Tennessee from 1901 to 1914. Said Lester, "So lucrative were these ventures that he was loath to give them up when in 1906 the Intercollegiate Conference resolved that coaches in member schools should have full-time academic appointments. Michigan stood by its coach, and after two years of debate left the conference, remaining out until 1917. The controversy continued, however, and in 1921 Yost's position at Michigan was finally legitimized with his appointment as director of intercollegiate athletics."

There was also controversy about him as a coach. In his zeal to acquire quality athletes, he sometimes recruited players before they had graduated from high school. As early as 1903 President David Starr Jordan of Stanford denounced such practices. He identified Yost as the practitioner of the "kind of corruptions in athletics that colleges should eschew," reported Lester.

Another coach whose life illustrates the changes in athletics in the U.S. and in Appalachia was a Texan, Robert Reese Neyland Jr. As Yost had done for Michigan, Neyland put the University of Tennessee on the football map. Neyland's legacy was large — and lasting. He changed forever the nature of weekends in Tennessee.

Sam Rayburn appointed Neyland to the Military Academy in 1912. A natural athlete, he played both baseball and football. He was a teammate of Omar Bradley on Army's National Championship football team of 1914. He came to the University of Tennessee in 1925, and the following year became head coach, a position he held for 21 seasons over a 26-year period, with two interruptions for military service.

Once in charge at Tennessee, Neyland summoned two of his Army teammates, William H. Britton, who coached the ends, and Paul B. Parker, line coach. They were called "the three Musketeers," and all were imbued with a sense of destiny worthy of Templars on a crusade in a foreign land.

When Neyland met his team on Labor Day, 1926 — the date is telling — he greeted his squad as follows: "Men, we will practice two and one-half hours each day. That's all. Each practice will be organized. We will know what we want to accomplish each day, and we will work full speed," wrote Bob Gilbert in *Neyland: The Gridiron General* (reviewed on page 44). Neyland thereupon closed the practices to the public. He was not the only celebrated advocate of secret knightly training, but he was perhaps its most celebrated exemplar.

It was not just his record, always the measure of success in sports, that made Neyland a legend but his aggressive style of play and military manner of coaching. Coming from the Military Academy, where he had been an aide to Superintendent Douglas MacArthur, Neyland was more of a gridiron general than a football evangelist like those coming out of the Eastern colleges. According to Gene McEver, Neyland's "greatest player," "Neyland ran his football team just like you'd run an Army. He was the first in command, and he didn't have much to do with the players." His method was precision and order, the same virtues admired by Fielding Yost and Amos Alonzo Stagg. "If you saw Tennessee run a play from its balanced-line single wing, you knew that play had been rehearsed a minimum of 500 times," said Clyde Bolton in *Unforgettable Days in Southern Football* (1974).

All who knew him felt that Neyland brought his military background to the game of football. It would be more correct to say that Neyland combined the language of religion and of war to come up with his 38 maxims which he regarded as "the football corollary to the Ten Commandments." Among these, according to Gilbert, were (1) "Thou shalt charge and block," (2) "Thou shalt charge and fight," (12) "Football is a battle. Go out to fight and keep it up all afternoon," (16) "You can't fight like a man with less than 100 percent loyalty and college spirit."

The man most responsible for bringing Neyland to Tennessee was Nathan W. Dougherty, "Mr. Volunteer," who was himself a Hall of Fame guard for Tennessee in 1909 and later Dean of the School of Engineering. Said Dougherty to the young Army officer, "Even the score with Vanderbilt. Do something about the terrible series standings." As Russ Bebb

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Pirate Woman

I After heaving the pole on Monday wash
supper pots in Lux liquid
my grandmother turns on the floor radio
listens for the bat's splinter
over crackling wires.
"Ida Ida Go Go"
she yells at Ralph Kiner
and her favorite, Garagiola,
short and fat like she is.
Blessed Mother medal in wrinkled fingers
she wills Rosey Rosewell's
"Open the window Aunt Minnie."
"Here it comes."
Cool September evenings
stocking garters rolled midcalf
dishwater dress bottle of Coca Cola
and her Pirates to keep her warm.

II Three games to three and everyone knows
we can't beat the Yankees in 1960
except my mother
who waves her iron in the kitchen
hot metal pierces radio waves.
She presses the same sheet
burns herself in the ninth inning
tied score two outs
Mazeroski at bat.
My mother, Polish by marriage
fears even more jokes if he strikes out.
Butter dripping from burnt fingers
she waits listens.
The ball flies toward left field
over ivy walls into Carnegie Library's lawn.
Pittsburgh's victory from the swing of a Polack.
The symphony of a series win in the backyard
my mother joins dancing neighbors
banging pots and pans
tears rolling down her face.

III My sister sits at the television
her earplugs attached to a transistor
fifth grade fingers
recording strikes in a spiral notebook.
Alley Stargell Alou
Clemente, third up to the plate
his ebony fists choke white pine.
Arriba Arriba
She listens for Bob Prince's
"Kiss it good-bye"
"We had em all the way"
She checks the averages in the morning paper
wearing the black and gold cap she slept in
orders a glove for her June birthday.
On the porch tossing catching.
The stitched hardball hits the house bricks.
She fields grounders
A Pirate tee shirt stuck to her training bra.

— Georgeann Eskievich Rettberg

Bingo

Mom plays five Grandma three
I stare at one
that's hard enough.
Black and white balls
click in the cage.
Dishwater hands hold corn.
Shmika yells in the microphone.
B 7
The Croatian Club bingo begins.

Evelyn wears her red gloves.
Stella holds her pheasant feather.
Helen brings her St. Jude statue
puts it on the free spot.
They think they are lucky.
"Eee Ha Crazy," Grandma whispers.
She and Mom nod at each other.
They know the secret
when I come along
they win some money.
O 75

I know the rules.
Don't shake the tables.
Talk quiet between games.
Don't spill the rootbeer.
If they win don't throw the corn
just yell bingo.
N 42

Hands wave like magic wands
"Ah Shit Dobre Good."
Grandma folds her hands
looks at the ceiling
in this room filled
with perfume and smoke
G 58

Grandma's hairnet creeps down her forehead.
She hunches over the cards
like a football player
waiting for the ball.
N 33

Mom needs I 20 Grandma B 12
I need five in each row
cause my card fell on the floor.
B 13

Grandma mutters. I wait for her
to bring out the rosary.
But she never does that.
God would be mad.
He only plays at St. Aloysius
when the priest blesses the numbers.
I 19

Mom hisses. Her fingers are cat claws
pouncing on cards.
Grandma covers her eyes
covers her ears
twists wrinkly fingers.
B 12 shouts Shmika.
I yell Bingo for Grandma.
When the check is over
she gives me a quarter.
I am a rich kid
lifting my rootbeer
toasting my Grandma.

— Georgeann Eskievich Rettberg

Georgeann Eskievich Rettberg is a Pittsburgh resident whose poetry has appeared often in Now and Then.

Bernie's Odyssey

Denver Nuggets' general manager Bernie Bickerstaff's basketball roots in Harlan County, Ky.

by Glenn Nelson

Benham, Ky., is an economically battered and slowly vanishing coal-mining community in Harlan County. The road to Benham is itself a deterrent to a journey there. A car ride takes one on a winding mountain road through Big Stone Gap, Va.

As difficult as it is to get to Benham, getting out is even trickier. For the general manager of the Denver Nuggets and the former head coach of the Seatle Supersonics, still known in his hometown as Bernard Bickerstaff, the road from Benham to Bernie was fraught with potholes and hairpin turns.

"To make it out of there..." a ruminating Bickerstaff says. "I appreciate where I am now. I reflect on that every day. That way, I get more enjoyment out of life. I don't take anything for granted."

Triumphing over the area's racial segregation, poverty and mining perils imbued the black children of Benham with a source of great strength. Whatever other hardships life cared to toss in their path would appear inconsequential by comparison.

During Bernie Bickerstaff's youth, racial integration was still a dream that interrupted fitful nights of sleep for men like Martin Luther King Jr. Time, and the Civil Rights Act, have changed much — and changed little — in southeastern Kentucky.

A day in Cumberland, now the area's economic center, reveals little interaction between the races — until Cumberland High School basketball games in the evening, where black faces in a sea of white are like Aleutians in the Pacific.

In Cumberland, University of Kentucky basketball reigns supreme, as it does in the rest of the state. Mere minutes from Benham exists a pervasive ignorance of the nationally chronicled National Basketball Association exploits of one Bernie Bickerstaff. Even at Benham City Hall, mention of Bickerstaff draws a "Who?" from a city employee.

It does spark a scintilla of recognition from a bystander.

"Ain't that the colored coach in Seattle?" he asks. "I think I read about him once. If you want to talk to people who know him, you'll have to go down to colored town."

From Benham City Hall, "colored town" is just across a bridge over the Poor Forks tributary of the Cumberland River. Black-owned homes line both sides of a street for the length of about three city blocks. Benham Methodist Church sits on a hill overlooking them. The Eastern Kentucky Social Club is about a block down from the church. There, and in neighboring Lynch, the accomplishments of favorite son Bernard Bickerstaff are well-known.

Outside "colored town," as such enclaves were known back in the mining heyday, exists a world of blissful ignorance. The black East Benham High Rams once ventured into the hills to play a game. During the first half, the basketball flew into the crowd. Bickerstaff went into the stands to retrieve it. A fan reached out, not to help him but, to Bickerstaff's horror, to hike down his shorts.

At halftime, the opposing coach told the Ram players not to take offense. The folks there were told that black people had tails. One of them wanted to see Bickerstaff's.

People who lived there say Benham was free of racial tension. But racial delineations were innately recognized. "That was just the deal," Bickerstaff says. "I didn't even think about color until I left the South."

Like most boys in the state, Bickerstaff spent cold winter nights by the radio. The program of choice was almighty Kentucky basketball, then presented to the worshipping masses by coaching deity Adolph Rupp.

After each game, Bickerstaff visited a gravel lot next to the home of Herman "Jelly" Rogers. With Bickerstaff was the basketball that came every Christmas. He'd fashion a hoop out of a coat hanger or baking-soda can, attach a burlap net cut from a hog feed bag and string them up on a tree. Coal dust blackening his clothes and permeating his pores, he'd reenact the game he'd just heard on the radio.

During those make-believe encore performances, Bickerstaff played the part of Johnny Cox, Cliff Hagan, Cotton Nash and Frank Ramsey — all Kentucky Wildcats. They all were white. He is black. But they were just names, not white faces.

"They were my heroes," Bickerstaff says. "All I cared about was the University of Kentucky winning games."

When it came time to care more about East Benham winning games, Bickerstaff's world still was a disparate black and white. Until his senior year in high school, the "colored" schools competed in their own state tournaments. Nevertheless, word leaked out about a wunderkind black player, the likes of which the region had never seen before. The boldest of the area's whites sneaked into Benham to watch Bickerstaff play, or to play with him.

"Bernie was one of the first blacks most of us got to know," says John Bond, a white, now girls' basketball coach at Cumberland High. "Everybody liked him. He was a breakthrough."

Breakthroughs were fleeting on the road from Benham to Bernie.

The migration out of Benham already had begun in earnest when Bernard Tyrone Bickerstaff was born in the four-room Benham house of his grandparents, Joseph and Georgia Willie Bickerstaff, on Nov. 2, 1943.

Two years after giving birth, Olivia Harris fled the region for New York, leaving her son Bernard. Benham held nothing for young women who wanted or needed work. Bernard's father, the now

Courtesy of Denver Nuggets

deceased Ralph Hood, already had drifted along. After some debate, Olivia's father, Joseph Bickerstaff, permitted his daughter to leave. Her son had to stay, he commanded. Joseph and Georgia Willie formally adopted their grandson soon afterward.

Life in Benham was artificially comfortable in those days. Rental homes and schooling were provided by the company. Children had wide open spaces and athletics. The Bickerstaffs kept their own garden, raised hogs up in the hills and chickens on the sly. Other provisions could be claimed at the company store in Benham. Most miners made purchases there on scrip.

"Next thing you know, you're working just to eat and wear," says Archie Williams, who toiled 52 years in the mines. "You learned never to get fond of something that cost a lot and took a long time to pay for. Not around the coal mines."

The Bickerstaffs were different. They eschewed the readily available credit and socked away their money instead. They never sensed their relative poverty, says Joyce Bickerstaff, who was born in the same house as her cousin Bernie. "We had the poor man's pocketbook," she says, "but always with middle-class aspirations."

Miners like the late Joseph Bickerstaff worked 10-to-12 hour shifts miles underground. Rock falls and errant machinery were a constant danger. Years of breathing coal dust wrought damage to lung tissues. Some, like Joseph Bickerstaff, succumbed to the insidious disease, black lung. After deductions for rent and other expenses, a Benham miner may have taken home close to $9 every two weeks.

"After 35 years in the mines," Bickerstaff laments, "all my grandfather got was a pin and black lung."

One thing about black lung, though. the disease did not discriminate between black and white. In many ways, coal was the great equalizer. Joyce Bickerstaff recalls meeting her father after shifts in the mines and having to distinguish dust-blackened white miners by searching for pairs of blue eyes.

While the miners worked together, the black and white communities remained apart. Segregation served to further bond the region's blacks into a kind of extended family. Many of them still reunite on Memorial Day and Labor Day every year.

The late Georgia Willie Bickerstaff was the lifeblood of young Bernard's support systems. They listened to baseball games together on the radio. Lacking much formal schooling, she was a resourceful woman. She built and maintained her own egg incubator, fashioned colorful quilts out of scraps and kept an equally colorful flower garden. And, as family and neighbors testify, Georgia Willie was extremely particular about Bernard.

To this day Georgia still is very much on Bickerstaff's mind. "She was the most important thing to me in life," he says. "I have only the highest accolades. My only regret was she was not around when I got my job in the NBA."

While paving his road out of Benham, young Bernard stood out in many ways. A former teacher, Constance Ellison, recalls him as being "the best-dressed boy in school." It is a trait he retains. Dressed for success, Bickerstaff was the first to arrive at school every morning, beating the bus which brought in many of his classmates. He was among the brightest of East Benham's students. And one of its most outspoken.

"Bernie could out-talk most everybody," recalls Dr. William Turner, a Lynch native, now chair of the sociology department at Winston-Salem (N.C.) State University. "He was smaller than most, but had that booming voice and would look you straight in the eyes. He could not be intimidated by other people."

Bickerstaff apparently talked his way into more trouble than out of it. He was the quintessential non-conformist or "clown," as most describe him. "You could never be down around Bernie," a lifelong friend, John Holloway, says. "He was always cutting up."

Ellison reckons Bickerstaff's penchant for being in the center of attention was the mark of a budding leader. Yet people around Benham began to worry that Bickerstaff was going to clown his life away. "I was constantly talking to him," Ellison says, "telling him what kind of potential he had and not to waste it."

It was a serious concern. Ellison and Joseph Bickerstaff were among the city's elders who constantly preached to Benham's youth about the necessity of breaking coal mining's dead-end cycle.

"Guys like Bernie accepted the view of guys like their fathers who said you must reach for the stars, because their livelihood was sort of reaching for the bowels," Turner says. "In a place like Benham, parents had to say, 'The world is yours. Now get the hell out of here and find it.'"

Everyone knew basketball was Bernie's ticket out of Benham. "When he got to know his way, there was no stopping him," says Lacy Lee, another of Bickerstaff's lifelong friends. "He always knew what he wanted. There was no doubting he'd get it. He was a take-charge kind of guy."

The incessant banging of a ball against the side of his home still rings in the otherwise faulty ears of Herman "Jelly" Rog-

Bernie's Odyssey

ers. On many a late night he turned to his wife, Leola, and declared wistfully, "I wish Bernard would go home so we can go to sleep." When Bickerstaff did go home, makeshift hoops strung up in his bedroom offered the chance for a few more pre-slumber jump shots. Rogers figures young Bernard slept with his ball.

Elsewhere, the sound of a bouncing ball sparked a hankering for hoops that superseded the original agenda. "Bernie would be dressed for a date and still stop to shoot a couple of baskets," his friend Holloway remembers. "He was possessed by basketball."

This obsession transformed Bickerstaff into a gifted player. His flashy, above-the-rim style, many say, was ahead of its time. Local newspaper write-ups often refer to Bickerstaff's "Dr. J style of play." Folks around the Lucky Penny in Cumberland still tell tales of a 6-foot forward at the colored school who could dunk from a flat-footed start.

The East Benham High basketball team, coached by Emmett Broadus, now with the Louisville Board of Education, was well-drilled and extremely athletic. They bedeviled opponents with their quickness on defense. Their defense fueled an attack that went full throttle in the open court, catering marvelously to the offensive skills of their star player.

Bickerstaff's last season at East Benham was the first year of open black and white competition in the Kentucky state tournament. He was named all-tourney after pelting Lynch with 33 points in the regionals. During the game's waning moments, however, Bickerstaff picked up his dribble in the corner and immediately was picked off by a Lynch player who scored a last-second layup.

Bickerstaff never forgot the resulting score: Lynch 64-63.

The bittersweet memories evaporated soon enough in the sweltering heat of the big city. In the summer, Bickerstaff bused, basketball in tow, to Cleveland, where he stayed with an uncle, or New York City to visit his mother.

Starting in 1957, the Ray Felix Tournament was held on a new playground at P.S. 127 in the Elmhurst district of Queens, just two blocks from the home of Olivia and Ernest Harris. Now the Neighborhood Basketball League, the Ray Felix Tournament was a summer-long endeavor.

The Rucker League, held over on the concrete island in Harlem, is more well-known. But anyone who was anything in basketball played in the Ray Felix Tournament. The pro division was stocked by such giants as Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell. They still buzz about the summer when the playground was invaded by a group of suburban kids from Long Island, led by a young master of levitation named Julius Erving.

Even among this galaxy of basketball stars, a young player hailing from a small Kentucky mining town was destined to shine.

Those summers in Queens proved to Bickerstaff "that I could compete against the big boys." From Queens and Cleveland, Bickerstaff embarked on the most difficult leg of his journey. At Rio Grande (Ohio) Junior College he saw first hand the evils of racial bigotry. Invariably, Bickerstaff was left at a service station outside some all-white town while the Rio Grande coach negotiated the entry of his lone black player. Occasionally, Bickerstaff was forced to relinquish his starting spot during visits to the hometowns of white Rio Grande reserves.

Embittered and distrustful of the white power structure, Bickerstaff left a stint as a scarfer at a Cleveland steel mill for San Diego. There Phil Woolpert, now deceased, wooed Bickerstaff to the University of San Diego.

Harley Soltes/Seattle Times

Herman "Jelly" Rogers, revisiting the Benham home in which Bernie Bickerstaff was born, had to listen to young Bernie bang baskets off a nearby wall and often told his wife Leola, "I wish Bernard would go home so we can go to sleep."

Woolpert weaned the street from Bickerstaff's game and the chip from his shoulder. Later, Woolpert would recall his prize protege from the clutches of the Harlem Globetrotters and an NBA expansion team, the San Diego Rockets, to become his assistant. Two years later, at 25, Bickerstaff succeeded Woolpert, becoming the youngest college head coach in the country.

Bickerstaff likes to evoke an observation from Duke Ellington, that it seemed in his own life there always was someone on the corner pointing him in the right direction. Woolpert, a college legend who coached national titles at San Francisco in 1955 and 1956 with Bill Russell and K.C. Jones, was Bickerstaff's most significant someone.

"I owe a lot to Phil Woolpert," he says. "I found out about fairness, and that's all I wanted."

San Diego also was where Bickerstaff met K.C. Jones, who was coaching the Conquistadors of the American Basketball Association. When Jones was offered the job as head coach of the NBA Bullets, he took Bickerstaff with him to Washing-

ton as an assistant. Bickerstaff was only 29 years old.

The greased skids ended in Washington. Bickerstaff quickly was hailed as one of the brightest assistants in the game. Nevertheless, he toiled for 12 years under Jones, Dick Motta and Gene Shue, three of the winningest coaches in NBA history. His former bosses and ex-players say racism was the reason for Bickerstaff's interminably long wait for an NBA head-coaching job. "The only reason he hasn't gotten a job before is because he's black," a white ex-Bullet, Jeff Ruland, said shortly before Bickerstaff was hired by the Sonics.

Rather than face the question of race again, Bickerstaff says he either wasn't ready or was waiting for the right opening. His wife, Eugenia, says, "I think Bernie rationalized it all to minimize the pain."

Significantly, it was Lenny Wilkens who salved the wound. When the then-Sonic general manager hired Bickerstaff in 1985, he had been the only black head coach in NBA history who was hired by one team (Seattle) after a losing season with another (Portland). In Seattle, Bickerstaff followed Wilkens (twice), Bob Hopkins and Bill Russell, all blacks.

Bickerstaff guided the Sonics to the Western Conference Finals following the 1986-87 season and earned NBA Coach of the Year honors after just his second year. In his five seasons with the Sonics, Bickerstaff led the team to the NBA Playoffs three times, including a trip to the Western Conference Finals, and won over 200 games. In July 1990 he became general manager of the Denver Nuggets.

Men like Woolpert, Jones and Wilkens may have opened doors for Bickerstaff. Clearly, Benham was the backlighting beacon that showed him the way to, and through, such openings.

Its support system — family, community, religion — forged a strong sense of self-assuredness among African American Benhamites like Bickerstaff. And Benham's looming death created a diaspora, a population instilled with an urgent sense of never daring to turn back.

Many of Bickerstaff's black southeastern Kentucky contemporaries today are doctors, lawyers and heads of companies. Cousin Joyce is a professor at Vassar College. Willie Thomas is an ex-Globetrotter and University of District of Columbia coach. Camelsville's Clem Haskins, Bickerstaff's major basketball foil in high school, played in the NBA.

Bickerstaff has five children. Three are grown up and out on their own, and two, Bernard and John Blair, still live with their parents.

"The only thing you can be sure of is you, but you don't always have control," Bickerstaff says. "I'm damn sure not going to be the reason for my own failure. I believe you have to catch the little things. Don't let them manifest themselves. And there's a million little things going on, so you've always got to be after it."

Life has shown Bickerstaff the fragile nature of triumph and given him highly developed survival skills. As frugal as his grandparents once were, he hoards his money like he does his ideas. One never knows when that rainy day will come.

The NBA, that pressure-cooker profession, holds nothing for Bernard Bickerstaff that he didn't see on his road from Benham to Bernie. "Where I came from was pressure," he says. "Being poor was pressure. Being black was pressure. That was daily. Compared to that, this is lightweight."

*Glenn Nelson is a sportswriter for the **Seattle Times**. This article is adapted from a feature Nelson wrote for **Pacific Magazine**, the Sunday supplement to the **Times**. Reprinted by permission.*

Telephone Call

Now listen, lady! You may know your litature
But you don't know shit about sports.
The very idea that you'd flunk my center
Is a crime against society.
It don't make no difference that he can't write a sentence
Or recite Richard Shakespeare.
He's a good boy and a good buddy,
And, my god, lady, he's almost seven feet tall!
Now understand, I ain't making no threats,
But if you don't change my Freddie's grade,
You might find a dent or two in your car—
Or even your husband.
Freddie won't never have no use for grammar.
The only reason that course is required
Is you're cozying up to the dean.
No, there ain't a thing you could say that I want to hear,
And I don't want to see you at no more of my ball games.
It all comes down, lady, to just one thing —
You damned English teachers ain't got no respect
For athaletes.

— Barbara Smith

Barbara Smith teaches English at Alderson-Broaddus College in Philippi, W.Va., and is a widely published poet.

Junior Johnson and the Sport Invented in Appalachia

"Junior Johnson is a modern hero, all involved with car culture and car symbolism in the South. A wild new thing."

— Tom Wolfe, "The Last American Hero" in the *Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby,* 1963.

Junior Johnson readily admits that he honed his driving skills making deliveries of bootlegged liquor. "In my younger days, I enjoyed the thrill of outrunning the revenuers," he told Brock Yates in *The Great Drivers.*

The law never did catch up with Johnson, at least on the road. Driving fast and using techniques like skidding into a 180 degree "bootleg turn," he eluded capture. He finally did get caught operating an illegal still and spent nearly a year in the federal penitentiary. (He was later pardoned by President Reagan.)

Before his scrape with the law, he had begun racing on local tracks, and when he got out of prison, he became a full-time racer. In a career that spanned nearly 20 years, he won 50 Grand National races.

Johnson used his nerve and creativity to win. He was the first to use drafting in a race (a car can follow another closely and be pulled along by the vacuum the first one creates). Using that technique, he won at Daytona in 1960. But Johnson was more interested in the simpler technique of staying ahead. "I'd rather lead one lap and fall out of the race than stroke it and finish in the money," he told Tom Wolfe.

Junior Johnson in 1944 at age 13. On the back of this photo are the words, "The one I'll always love — Flossie Clark."

Junior and Flossie Johnson.

When Johnson retired from driving in 1966, he built a large brick home in North Wilkesboro, N.C., not far from where he had grown up. He and his wife Flossie set up a chicken farming operation and a garage for building stock cars. Johnson's staff of 40 mechanics, metal fabricators, machinists and draftsmen build cars, two or three of which may run in the same race. Though he is not a formally trained engineer, Johnson has patented several sophisticated racing car parts.

He has become a legend as the subject of a renowned profile by Tom Wolfe in his collection of essays on popular culture, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby,* and as the subject of a fictionalized movie biography, "The Last American Hero," (1973, starring Jeff Bridges).

"I've been a luckier man than most," he says in *The Great Drivers.* "I've sorta lived three lives. First I was a bootlegger, then I was a race driver, then I was a car owner. And I enjoyed 'em all, and I accepted them for what they were."

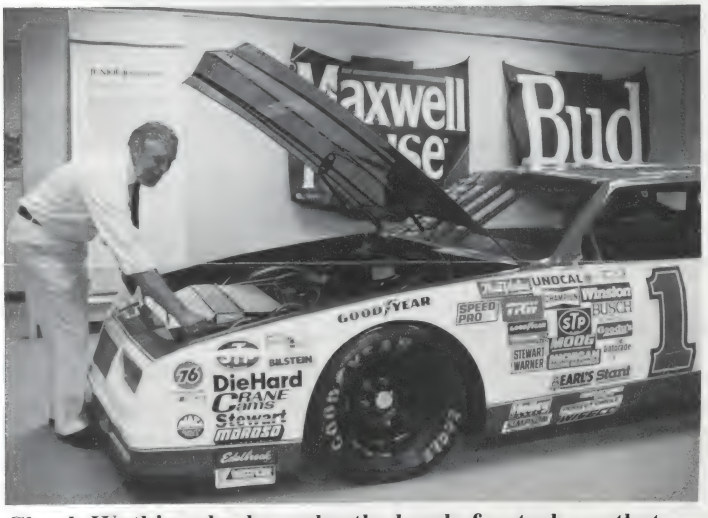
From back roads to major sponsors

The rise of stock car racing in America

Stock car racing began after World War II, with Junior Johnson and others like him who had learned their driving and car customizing skills on back roads hauling illegal liquor. In the early days of the sport, competitors drove cars that came off the assembly line — stock cars — that they enhanced with high performance equipment. Today the only part that is "stock" is the outward appearance. Other parts come from specialty garages or are fabricated by the mechanics and engineers who work in garages such as Junior Johnson's. An engine alone might cost $100,000.

Stock car racing is big business today with tracks from Florida to New York to California. Last year, according to the *Business Journal of Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia,* 272 major professional U.S. auto racing events drew a record of 12.5 million spectators. This year 4,500 companies will spend a total of $3.3 billion on sponsorships.

Hood salvaged from one of Junior Johnson's cars that was wrecked at Bristol, Tenn., racetrack, 1991, now displayed at the Appalachian Culture Museum at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C. "This is modern art," says museum director Chuck Watkins.



Chuck Watkins checks under the hood of a stock car that has been raced and is now exhibited at the Appalachian Culture Museum.

Flossie Johnson said of this picture of her husband, "Now, that's what a race car driver should look like."

Notes on a museum's tribute

Chuck Watkins, director of the Appalachian Culture Museum at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C., likes to tell how he went to see Junior Johnson at the race car driver's home in North Wilkesboro. Watkins expected to find some fellows out back, hoisting an engine out of a car with a block and tackle thrown over a branch of the tree. After all, when he drove up, he had found Johnson himself wearing overalls and plowing the garden with a mule. But behind the hand-plowed garden was a garage filled with gleaming high-tech equipment. The mule and plow must be a hobby, Watkins realized.

After hearing the museum director's ideas, Junior Johnson readily donated two cars, photos and trophies to the museum. He also contributed a pair of racing coveralls and a coon hunting trophy (which Watkins believes is the only coon hunting trophy in any museum in the world).

The Junior Johnson exhibit, which was installed six years ago, is the highlight of the museum that shows the history of Appalachia beginning with its formation as a mountain chain.

As a museum director, Watkins said he wanted to cover the reality of Appalachia. He was interested in "redefining what Appalachian artifacts are. Here's a sport that started in the mountains."

He admits another motive in having the Junior Johnson exhibit. The museum draws in children from school groups all over the region. The car exhibit captures their interest. "It gets them involved. They might not bring their parents back to see arrowheads, but they'll bring them back to see this."

— Pat Arnow

All photos from the Appalachian Culture Museum at Appalachian State University.

Tourism 12, Tradition 0

The Decline of Cherokee Stickball

Cherokee stickball was formerly much more than an exhibition sporting event: it was a ritualized contest between townships and tribes to settle arguments that otherwise might have escalated into feuds and wars.

After the U.S. Government banned stickball around 1900 (reasons given for this banning were the game's roughness, the spectators' rowdiness and the excessive wagering on the outcome of the game), the Cherokees introduced a revised version of stickball. Proving to be a popular feature at the First Annual Cherokee Indian Fair of 1914, this tamer version of the game was offered as an exhibition sport at subsequent Cherokee-sponsored events, such as at the Cherokee Fall Festival. Thereafter, with the economy of Qualla Boundary becoming dependent on tourism, stickball increasingly functioned as a money-making exhibition sport; yet, since stickball in its exhibition form needed to appeal to the white man's standards of propriety, the game's elaborate ritualism was not performed for tourists. Consequently, younger Cherokee were soon more familiar with exhibition stickball than they were with the original version of the game.

—Ted Olson

Excerpted from "Cherokee Stickball: A Changing Tradition" which will appear in the 1993 edition of the *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association*, Box 70556, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 37614-0556.

Photo courtesy of Great Smoky Mountains National Park

The Cherokee have played stickball in the Southern Mountains for centuries. Each 10-man team tries to get the ball through the opposing team's goal. As in football, the ball carrier's teammates run interference and block out the opponents. The first team to make 12 points wins the game. Photographer Jim Thompson, reporting on this game on the Qualla Boundary in Western North Carolina in 1932, wrote: "Any kind of tackling goes. Even the sticks, held at each end, are often used on the back of the ball carrier's neck in an effort to get him to throw away the ball. Players often land in the hospital." Today the Cherokee play a much tamer version of stickball in exhibition games for tourists on the Qualla Boundary.

Voice of the Wildcats

Cawood Ledford

wants to go home. He was born in Cawood, Ky., a small Harlan County town named for his mother's family.

The first time he left was to attend Centre College in Danville, Ky., in 1945. On weekends he and some friends would drive into nearby Lexington to watch another Harlan County native, Wallace "Wah Wah" Jones, play basketball for the University of Kentucky Wildcats. Jones was one of UK Coach Adolph Rupp's "Fabulous Five" and therefore would be remembered at UK long after he graduated. But it was Ledford, cheering in the stands then, whose name would become inextricably linked with the Wildcats. They would keep him from home for a long time.

He did go back to Harlan for a while after graduating from college in 1949. He worked in the office at Modern Bakery. He wasn't cut out for that type of work, he says. He taught English at Hall High School and enjoyed it but didn't want to go back to school for more education courses. He assisted the high school basketball coach and liked it so much that he considered becoming a coach. He realized, however, that he wasn't coach material. His mother wanted him to be a pharmacist.

Then destiny called. Via telephone. His friend Charlie Ward planned to leave his job as a sports announcer at Harlan radio station WHLN and wanted to recommend Ledford for the job. So Ledford made an audition tape and heard his own voice for the first time. He hated it. But WHLN disagreed. He spent the next two years covering high school basketball and football and the Harlan Smokies Class D baseball team in the Mountain States League. Someone from Lexington heard him announcing a basketball game and recommended him for a job at WLEX. So he left Harlan again in 1953, and he's still trying to go back.

After he left Letcher County, Ledford was still a presence there. Over the next 39 years, almost everyone in Harlan County would listen to him on the radio as he called play-by-play for the UK football and basketball games. A listener in the tiny town of Benham, Bernie Bickerstaff, would one day make a name for himself in basketball (see page 14). In 1956 Ledford moved still farther from Harlan when he joined radio station WHAS in Louisville. Though he was now in University of Louisville Cardinal country, he was still one of the announcers covering UK sports.

He became well known for his tailored suits and elegant ties. But it was his accuracy and elegant turns of phrase that really brought him respect and a loyal following among listeners. Many Kentuckians grew up listening to him on the radio, seeing UK games through his eyes. It became common for Kentuckians to turn down the sound on the television set and listen to Ledford's broadcast while watching the game.

In 1967, while at WHAS, he became the exclusive voice of the Wildcats. In 1973, he was asked to become the voice of the Louisville Cardinals. Though flattered by the offer, Ledford says, "Somehow I just couldn't see myself being anything other than the 'Voice of the Wildcats'."

He moved back to Wildcat headquarters in 1979, when he and partner Jim Host formed Cawood Ledford Productions in Lexington. In addition to his broadcasting work, including pre-game shows, play-by-play, post-game shows and coaches' shows, he began producing a tabloid-size newspaper, *Cawood on Kentucky*. He also wrote a book, *Cawood's Comments*. All the while, he still produced commentaries and covered the Kentucky Derby, his favorite sports event, for WHAS.

by Laurene Scalf

Cawood Ledford

His dedication has not gone unnoticed. He has received several Eclipse Awards for meritorious reporting of thoroughbred racing. He has been named Kentucky's Sportscaster of the Year 22 times by the National Sportscasters and Sports Writers Association. He is in both the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame *and* the Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame. He is the only person other than a player or coach to have his honorary jersey retired in UK's Rupp Arena. That, says Ledford, is "the highest honor of my life." When he announced his intention to retire and return to Harlan County at the end of the 1991-92 season, the national media picked up the story.

The voice may have signed off for good, but the rest of Ledford keeps on working. He and *Sports Illustrated* writer, Billy Reed, have written a book on Ledford's career, aptly titled *Hello Everybody, This Is Cawood Ledford* (reviewed on page 45). Since the end of basketball season last spring, he has spent a lot of time on the road, making personal appearances and promoting the book. His hectic itinerary made the following telephone interview difficult to schedule. Once on the phone, however, he was genial and generous with his time. The famed voice at the other end of the line warmed to the subjects of sports, Appalachia and his old Kentucky home.

Rumor has it that you're planning to move back to Harlan County, to Cawood.

That's true. I don't know how quickly we'll get back there. Things are moving more slowly than we had hoped. We're both from there, my wife and I. We own a little place down there. It's home. Our roots are there.

You wrote in your book about the camaraderie you shared with your competing University of Kentucky sportscasters in the early '50s, with J.B. Faulconer and Claude Sullivan. Was such camaraderie more common then among those in the profession?

I think it was in those days because that was before you had an exclusivity,just one originating broadcast from each school. Some schools had it at that time, but we had four, and that grew to five. I like what Claude Sullivan said, that we only competed for an hour-and-a-half on game nights. We traveled together. We were friends. To me it was like playing a game. When you go out on the court or on the field, you try like heck to beat the other team, but once the final horn sounds, I don't see why you can't be friends.

You said there's nothing like competition to make you work and make you sharp.

Well, I was the new boy on the block, and boy, if you didn't hustle and work, you weren't going to be there very long. It's not that way any more, and I think it's kind of a shame. Because that kind of situation does make you sharp; it makes you work, and I don't think you ever get rid of that habit. I worked just as hard last season as I did the first season.

Bob Edwards and Noah Adams, both of National Public Radio, are from Kentucky. Is there something in the Kentucky voice which lends itself to broadcasting?

Well, I don't know. But it seems to me that people associated with this area have had an almost disproportionate success in sportscasting. They're not all *native* Kentuckians, but [among former UK athletes] there's Tom Hammond who's now going right up the ladder with NBC. Larry Conley is one of the top college basketball analysts in the country. Dan Issel did the Nuggets games until he took the Nuggets coaching job this year. Kevin Grevey, who played here, did the Bullets color for many years. Pat Riley was color analyst for the Lakers when he got the assistant's job which led to the head coaching job.

Do young people in Harlan County approach you as a role model? Do they ask you how to become a sportscaster?

Well, I haven't lived in Harlan County in 39 years. I don't really know any young people there. But I get mail from all over the country from people who want to know how to get into it and how they should prepare themselves for it. The first thing they have to do now (maybe this wasn't the case when I first started, but it is now) is to get a college education. And I suggest they go into English or journalism. English, I think, is a great degree to get to go into broadcasting. Then try to get intern jobs during the summers. They won't get any money for it, but they can work in a TV or radio station and be way ahead of somebody who's never been near a station. Get some exposure to the work. You may not even like it once you get in there and do the day-to-day work.

Parallels can be drawn between the importance of basketball to school kids in Appalachian hollers and its importance to kids in big city ghettos. Why are Appalachians so crazy for basketball?

Well, I think Appalachians until recent years were rather isolated. But they were able to follow the progress of programs like that at University of Kentucky through radio and TV. Schools were small and allowed a lot of people a chance to play. Basketball didn't cost much. All you needed were a pair of tennis shoes and a ball, whereas in football you need a lot of equipment. A lot of the Eastern Kentucky schools didn't even play football. They're getting more into it now as the schools go into a bigger size. When the schools were small, though, every school could have a basketball team without much money.

Do you think kids from Eastern Kentucky look to the possibility of being another Michael Jordan as a major avenue to the future?

Whether it's Eastern Kentucky or Louisville or New York City or L.A., any kid who is predicating his career on playing professional sports of any kind is taking a real long shot. Only about one percent of the Division I college players ever make it to the pros. And this is at the top level. That means that 99 percent have to do something else for a living. Any time anyone from Eastern Kentucky or anywhere loses sight of why they're going to college — to get an education — then they're in big-time trouble. We had a tribute dinner for me at the end of the season and raised about $100,000. That's going into a scholarship fund for UK athletes, men and women, who for any reason drop out without getting their degree and years later want to come back. So many of them have come back on their own. Things haven't gone really well for them out in the business world. They've had a tough time financially coming back to get the degree, but they've done it. That's really pleasing to me.

Are there other such scholarship funds?

As far as I know, it's the first. I think you'll see it happen at other schools. I know the Georgia coach, Hugh Durham, who is from Louisville originally, took part in the program. He even gave us a donation. I wouldn't be too surprised if he started something like that at Georgia.

How have sports in Appalachia changed over the years?

The big change has been the consolidation of the schools. Where you had a lot of small schools in the '50s, you have fewer now. And there's been a decline in population in the Kentucky part of Appalachia. So even though fewer people get a chance to play sports, those who do play get better coaching and tougher competition and so will be better players. Two of the four seniors who led UK basketball back to the Promised Land this year were from Eastern Kentucky: John Pelfrey out of Painstsville and Richie Farmer from Manchester. Perhaps there aren't as many players coming out of the mountains now as there were in the '40s and '50s, but those who do come along really put it on the line.

Your book contains detailed and exciting accounts of many football and basketball games you covered over the years. Did you really remember them in such detail, or did you listen to old tapes of the games?

I remember the good games. Since the book came out, I've realized that I left out some that I wish now I'd put in there. But you can only have so many pages. I have a fairly good memory. Some of the games that weren't so hot you don't remember a lot of the details about. But the really good games — you can almost go back and see them again in your mind.

They were exciting to read. I felt I was actually watching them. How many games have you called in your career?

Four-hundred-and-some football and over a thousand basketball. Those were just UK games. I've done other games over the years, too.

What was your relationship with (one-time baseball commissioner and former Kentucky governor) Happy Chandler? Public perception of him varied so widely. Some credited him with integrating baseball when he was Commissioner.

Cawood Ledford says good-bye to fans at the last University of Kentucky football game he announced, 1991.

Others point to racist comments he allegedly made at a UK Board of Trustees meeting.

I thought he was a delightful man. I knew him well and had many conversations with him. You know, he was in his 90s when the controversy happened at the Board of Trustees meeting. He was too old to be serving on that or on any board. He was not a racist. He did a lot to integrate sports and should be given credit.

Racism has been open and rampant in the history of Southeastern college sports. The Southeastern Conference (SEC) had no black basketball players until Perry Wallace played for Vanderbilt in 1967.

A lot has changed since then. At one time the state of Mississippi had a policy that prevented any of its college teams from playing blacks, much less having blacks on the team. [In 1958, Mississippi State was the league champion but passed up an invitation to the NCAA tournament because it meant playing against blacks. So the runner-up, University of Kentucky, went to the tournament.] UK was the first SEC school to recruit a black player. That was in football, not basketball. Nowadays good black players are sought after just the same as good white players throughout the region.

Your co-author, Billy Reed, has garnered some animosity over the years from Wildcat fans who took exception to things he has written about UK in the [Louisville] ***Courier-Journal*** *and in* ***Sports Illustrated****. Have you had any negative reaction to your collaboration with a writer some UK fans might consider inimical?*

None. You know, I've known Billy a long time. We're good friends, and I respect his work. I called him and asked him to work on this project with me. And I've been delighted with the results.

In his introduction to the book, Reed enumerated some questions that a journalist is always asking himself or herself: Did I do a good job? Did I make any mistakes? Was I fair? How would you answer those questions for yourself?

I think I did a good job. I made mistakes, of course. I made a lot of mistakes. As to being fair, I prefer the word "honest." Yes, I think I was honest. The important thing to me has always been to call the games as I see them. My first obligation has never been to the team or the coaches or the university but to the people at home who did me the courtesy to turn on the radio and listen.

Laurene Scalf, a former Lexington resident and longtime admirer of Cawood Ledford, now lives in Jonesborough, Tenn.

GREAT ATHLETES OF APPALACHIA NOW AND THEN

GEORGE BLANDA

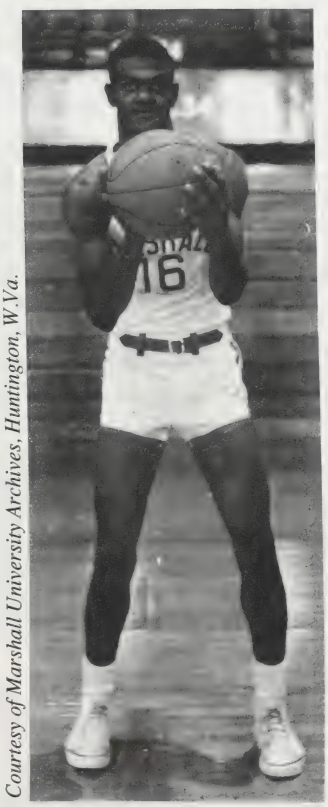
Football. Born 9-17-27 in Youngwood, Pa. **Played an unprecedented 26 football seasons, 340 games, 224 consecutive games, made 2,002 lifetime points,** 335 of 638 field goal attempts and scored in 40 consecutive games from 12-11-60 through 11-10-63. Chicago Bears '49-'58. Houston Oilers '60-'67. Oakland Raiders '67-'76. AFL #1 passer in '61, with 3,362 attempts and 187 completions, total 3,330 yards and 36 touchdowns. AFL Player of the Year in '63. Led AFL in scoring in '67. AFL All-Star games: '62, '63, '64, '68. In '70, named AFC Player of the Year and Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year. NFL Man of the Year in '74. Inducted into the National Football Hall of Fame in '81.

ED BRADLEY

Horse breeding and Bookmaking. Born 12-12-1859 in Johnstown, Pa. With money made playing poker and betting on Indian pony races, he founded the famous Idle Hour Stock Farm in 1893. He was the **first owner to send four winners to the Kentucky Derby.** Died 8-15-46.

LEW BURDETTE

Baseball. Born 11-22-26 in Nitro, W. Va. Pitching for the Milwaukee Braves, **won all three starts against the New York Yankees in the '57 World Series.** Pitched no-hitter against Philadelphia Phillies '60. Boston Braves '51-'52 and Milwaukee Braves '53-'63. St. Louis Cardinals '63-'64, Chicago Cubs '64-'65, Los Angeles Angels '66-'67. Coached Atlanta Braves '72. Played 626 games with 203 wins, 144 losses, 158 complete games, 33 shutouts, 3.66 ERA, struck out 1,074 batters.



Courtesy of Marshall University Archives, Huntington, W.Va.

Hal Greer

JESSE BURKETT

Baseball. From Wheeling, W. Va. One of only three batters (the others are Ty Cobb and Rogers Hornsby) to **hit .400 in three seasons**. Played from 1890-1905. Lifetime batting average .342. National Baseball Hall of Fame '46.

ANN CAVALLARO

Amateur golf. From Morgantown, W. Va. Accomplished an unprecedented women's golf feat on 9-21-76: **shot two holes-in-one in a three-hole span** at Bel Meadows Country Club near Bridgeport. The feat included a 121-yard shot on the14th hole and a 97-yard shot on the16th hole.

TY COBB

Baseball. Born 1886 in Banks County, Ga. Amassed a **.367 lifetime batting average,** stole 892 bases. Detroit Tigers '05-'26, Philadelphia Athletics '27-'28. Managed Detroit Tigers '21-'26. Elected to Baseball Hall of Fame '36. Died 1961.

ARLEY COOPER

Baseball. Born 2-24-1892 in Bearsville, W. Va. A left-handed pitcher and right-handed batter who excelled at both. In 13 years with the Pittsburgh Pirates, had 202 victories, making him the **Pirates' all-time winningest pitcher**. Led all major league pitchers with a .346 batting average in '24. Pittsburgh Pirates '12-'24. Chicago Cubs '25-'26. Detroit Tigers '26. Minor Leagues '27-'37. Major league .548 winning percentage. 36 career shutouts, including eight 1-0 complete games wins. Struck out 1,252 batters in 3,480 innings. 2.89 ERA. 293 career hits. Died 8-7-73.

GLENN "JEEP" DAVIS

Track and Field, Football. Born in Wellsburg, W.Va. **Won three Olympic gold medals** for 400-meter hurdles in '56 and '60 and the 1,600-meter relay in '60. Set five world records. Sullivan Award for top amateur '58. National Track and Field Hall of Fame. Played football with Detroit Lions '60-'62.

JIM GALLAWAY

Softball. From Bluefield, W. Va. Hit over 2,000 home runs and was dubbed **the "Babe Ruth of Softball"** by *Sports Illustrated*. Named to the All-World team eight times.

HAL GREER

Basketball. From Huntington, W.Va. In 1956, became first black to play for Marshall University. Averaged over 20 points per game at Philadelphia '64-'70. Played forward, guard and center. Played 1,122 games. Made 8,504 goals. **Scored 21,586 points**. NBA championship team '67.

STEVE HAMILTON

Basketball, Baseball. Born 11-3-34 in Columbia, Ky. The only athlete known to have played in the

ABBREVIATIONS

ACC - Atlantic Coast Conference
AFC - American Football Conference
AFL - American Football League
AL - American League (baseball)
ERA - Earned Run Average
MVP - Most Valuable Player
NBA - National Basketball Association
NCAA - National Collegiate Athletic Association
NL - National League (baseball)
PGA - Professional Golfers Association
RBI - Runs Batted In
SEC - Southeastern Conference
USFL - United States Football League

Mary Lou Retton

John Veasey

NCAA basketball tournament (at Morehead College in '56), the NBA championship and the World Series. All-American '57. Minneapolis Lakers '58-'60. Cleveland Indians '61. Washington Senators '62-'63. New York Yankees '63-'70. **Pitched in the World Series '63 and '64.** Chicago White Sox '70. San Francisco Giants '71. Coached minor league Johnson City, Tenn., Yankees in '73. Now athletics director at Morehead State University in Morehead, Ky.

JOHN HAVLICEK

Basketball. Born 4-8-40 in Martins Ferry, Ohio. Named to the NBA 35th Anniversary All-Time Team in 1980. Boston Celtics '62-'78. All-Star Game '66-'78. **NBA Championship Team '63-'66, '68-'69, '74, '76**. NCAA Championship Team '60. Inducted into Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame '83.

"SHOELESS" JOE JACKSON

Baseball. Born 7-16-1887 in Brandon Mills, S.C. Left fielder, Philadelphia '08-'09, Cleveland '10-'15, Chicago '15-'20. Batted .408 in '11, second to Ty Cobb for season title. Third in lifetime batting average of .356. Led the league in triples in '12, '16 and '20. In '13, lead the league in hits, doubles and slugging. "Shoeless Joe" was banned for life after the 1919 Black Sox Scandal. He forever denied his involvement. Became the **central figure in the movie "Field of Dreams"** based on the 1982 book "Shoeless Joe" by W. P. Kinsella. Died 12-5-51.

For the great University of Tennessee football players, see page 40.

PAULA MARTIN

Swimming and Track. From Moundsville, W.Va. A double amputee, **won five gold medals in the 1976 Wheelchair Olympics** in Toronto, Canada. Competed in the javelin, shotput, 60-yard dash and 50-yard freestyle swimming.

THOMAS "BUM" MCCLUNG

Football. Born 3-26-1870 in Knoxville, Tenn. A runner and kicker, credited with **150 touchdowns and over 1,000 points in his career** (a touchdown and a field goal each counted five points then). Yale halfback: All-American '90, '91; captain '91. National Football Hall of Fame. U.S. Treasurer '09-'12. Died 4-25-36.

WILLIE MAYS

Baseball. Born 5-6-31 in Westfield, Ala. Played in every All-Star game from 1954 to 1973. Joined National Negro League Birmingham Barons at age 17. Played 35 games for Minneapolis in '51 then joined New York Giants. Played for Giants '54-'57, San Francisco Giants '58-'71, New York Mets '72-'73. Batted above .300 ten times. Named **Player of the Decade** ('60-'69) by *The Sporting News*. Played 20 World Series games, batted .239. Stole 338 bases. Lifetime .302 batting average. Overall, played 2,992 games, 10,881 at bats, 3,283 hits, 523 doubles, 140 triples, 660 home runs; 1,903 RBI, .981 fielding average.

BILL MAZEROSKI

Baseball. Born 9-5-36 in Wheeling, W.Va. **Made seven All-Star appearances**. Played second base for Pittsburgh Pirates '56-'72. Played 2,163 games, 2,016 hits, 294 doubles, 62 triples, 138 home runs, 853 RBI, .260 batting average. Coached Pirates '73. Coached Seattle Mariners '79-'80. Now publishes *Bill Mazeroski's Baseball*, an annual pre-season magazine. (See poem on page 13.)

JOE MONTANA

Football. Born 6-11-56 in New Eagle, Pa. Quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers since 1979. **Super Bowl championship team '82, '85, '89**. Played in Pro Bowl '82-'85. Super Bowl Most Valuable Player '82, '85. NFL Most Valuable Player '89.

STAN MUSIAL

Baseball. Born 11-21-20 in Donora, Pa. Retired with a **.331 lifetime batting average**. First baseman and outfielder for St. Louis Cardinals '41-'63. NL Rookie of the Year '43. NL MVP '43, '46, '48. NL All-Star team '43-'44, '46-'63. Voted MVP by Baseball Writers Committee '46. *The Sporting News* Major League Player of the Year '46, '51;. *Sports Illustrated* Sportsman of the Year '57. Baseball Hall of Fame '69.

JOE NAMATH

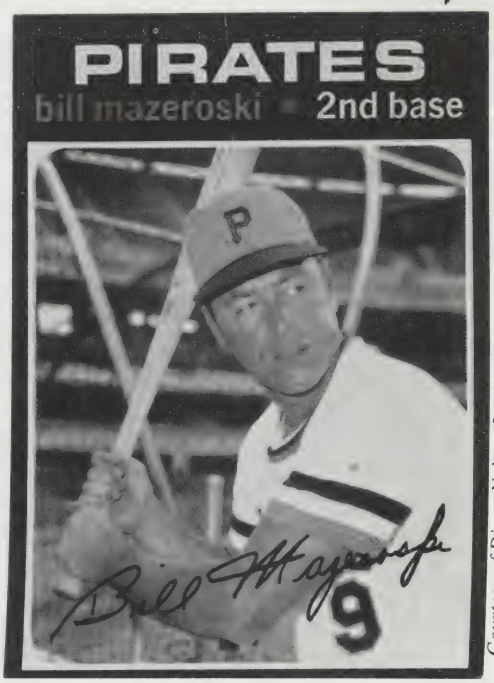
Football. Born 5-31-43 in Beaver Falls, Pa. Played football at the University of Alabama under the legendary Paul "Bear" Bryant and went on to become a legend in his own right. **Quarterback for New York Jets '65-'77** and Los Angeles Rams '77-'78. Commentator ABC Monday Night Football '85-'86. Named AFL Rookie of the Year by *The Sporting News* '65. AFL All-Star Team '68, '72. Super Bowl Most Valuable Player '69. Named to Pro Football Hall of Fame. Established a scholarship for women athletes at University of Alabama.

MARTHA NORELIUS

Swimming. White Sulphur Springs, W. Va. While still in high school, won a **gold medal in the 1924 Olympics in Paris** for the 400-meter freestyle event with a time of 6:02.2. Received another gold medal for the same event (clocking 5:42.8) and a third for the 400-meter relay in the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam.

ARNOLD PALMER

Golf. Born 9-10-29. From Latrobe, Pa. Has won over 90 tournaments since 1955. Masters championship '58, '60, '62, '64. Associated Press Ath-



Courtesy of Diana Nelson Jones

Bill Mazeroski

lete of the Decade '69. *Sports Illustrated* Sportsman of the Year '60,'62. **PGA Tour Money Leader '58, '60, '62,'63**. World Golf Hall of Fame, PGA Hall of Fame. Designs golf courses and writes books on golf.

VITO PARILLI

Football. Born 5-7-29 in Rochester, Pa. A 28-8 record at the University of Kentucky ('49-'52) won him the moniker **"Sweet Kentucky Babe."** Won '51 Sugar Bowl and '52 Cotton Bowl. Played with Green Bay, Cleveland, Boston, Oakland, New York and Ottawa Rough Riders. Was Joe Namath's backup in Super Bowl III ('70). Coached for Virginia Tech, Texas A&M, Chicago Winds and Pittsburgh Steelers.

CUMBERLAND POSEY JR.

Basketball, Baseball. Born 6-20-1890 in Homestead, Pa. In 1913, formed and played for the Leondi Big Five basketball team, the nation's first great black team. Played against New York Celtics and claimed national championship by '19. Played for Big Five through '25. Owner of National Negro League Homestead Grays. Played for Homestead Grays '10. Field captain of Grays '15-'28. Managed Grays '19-'35. Formed Grays basketball team in '27 and beat New York Celtics three of five games. **Won nine straight Negro League pennants and two Negro World Series.** Led '37 team to a 152-24 record.

FRITZI QUARRIER

Golf. Wheeling, W. Va. **Won a record 10 state amateur golf championships** between '27 and '40. On first U.S. Women's International team (later named Curtis Cup) '30.

Courtesy of the University of Tennessee

Pat Head Summit

Courtesy of Doug Huff

Sam Snead

BETSY RAWLS

Golf. Born 5-2-28, Spartanburg, S. C. Co-founder of the Ladies Professional Golf Association, **won four U.S. Women's Open and two LPGA championships.** LPGA Hall of Fame in '60. Tournament director '75 - '81.

MARY LOU RETTON

Gymnastics. Born 1967 in Fairmont, W. Va. Won the **Olympic gold medal in the all-around gymnastics competition** in 1984. Scored a perfect 10 on her first vault and, taking the optional second try, scored another perfect 10. A gymnastic move, the "Retton flip," named for her. First female athlete to appear on the Wheaties cereal box.

WILLIAM P. RHINES

Baseball. Born 3-14-1869 in Ridgway, Pa. Led National League pitchers in ERA in 1890 (1.95) and 1896 (2.45). Played for Cincinnati '95-'97 and Pittsburgh '98-'99. **Pitched 13 shutouts**. Died 1-30-22.

BRANCH RICKEY

Baseball. Born 12-20-1881 in Stockdale, Ohio. **Best remembered for integrating major league baseball** by signing Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. He also initiated baseball's farm system. Catcher and outfielder. St. Louis AL '05-'06. New York AL '07. St. Louis AL '19. Played 110 games, .239 batting average. Gave up 13 stolen bases in a single game '07. Managed St. Louis AL '13-'15. President St. Louis NL '17-'20, managed team '19-'25. Became general manager of Brooklyn Dodgers '42.

SAM SNEAD

Golf. Born in Hot Springs, Va. Has **won more golf tournaments than any other golfer in history**, including 11 West Virginia PGA titles and 17 West Virginia Open titles. PGA Vardon trophy '38, '49, '50, '55. Player of the Year '49. PGA Champion '42, '49, '51. Won British Open '46. Won Masters Tournament '49, '52, '54. In ducted into the National Golf Hall of Fame '63. Won Legends of Golf Championship '82.

STEVE SPURRIER

Football. Grew up in Johnson City, Tenn. Set 17 records at University of Florida. All - American '65-'66. **Only the third southerner to win Heisman Trophy through '66**. San Francisco 49ers '67-'76. Tampa Bay Buccaneers '77. Assistant coach at Forida '78, Georgia Tech '79, and Duke '80. Coached Tampa Bay in the USFL from '83-'85 with a record of 35-19. Head coach at Duke '87-'89. ACC Coach of the Year '88 - '89. Florida Head Coach '90 -'91 with 19-4 overall record First coach to post an unbeaten, untied season in SEC, '91. SEC Coach of the Year '90-'91.

PAT HEAD SUMMIT

Basketball. Born 6-14-53 in Ashland City, Tenn. As a player won Olympic silver medal '76. **As a coach, brought home the first Olympic gold medal in women's basketball for the U.S. '84.** Coached University of Tennessee's Lady Vols since '73, with a record of 470-121. Won three NCAA titles in five years from '86-'91. First female to win Basketball Hall of Fame's John Bunn Award '90. Fifth winningest active coach in NCAA. Has produced eight U.S. basketball Olympians, 14 All-Americans and boasts a 100 percent graduation rate of her players.

LIONEL TAYLOR

Football. Graduate of Buffalo High School in Logan County, W. Va. All-conference honors at New Mexico Highland University. In '61, while playing for the Denver Broncos, was the **first professional player to catch 100 passes in a single season.** Led the AFL in receiving for four of its first five years. Landed 576 receptions for three teams from '59-'68.

ROD THORN

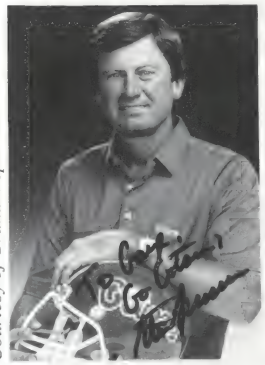
Basketball . Born 1941 in Princeton, W.Va. To recruit him to West Virginia University, the legislature passed a resolution calling Thorn a "great natural resource." Named **All-American in '61 while also playing baseball on WVU's championship team**. Joined NBA in Baltimore in '64, Detroit '65-'66, St. Louis '66-'67, Seattle '68-'71. Assistant coach at Seattle '71-'73, New York Nets '73-75 and '76-'78, and Seattle '75-'76. General manager of the Chicago Bulls, '78-'85. NBA Vice President of Operations '85 to present.

CLINTON THOMAS

Baseball. Born 11-25-1896 in Greenup, Ky. Hit unconfirmed **.407 in 1924.** Outfielder in Negro Leagues. Brooklyn Royal Giants '20. Columbus Buckeyes '21. Detroit Stars '22. Philadelphia Hilldales, '24-'28. Atlantic City Bacharach Giants '29. Lincoln Giants '30-'34.

JOHNNY UNITAS

Football. Born 5-7-33 in Pittsburgh, Penn. Played for Baltimore Colts '56-'72. San Diego Chargers '73-'74. **Played 47 consecutive games in which he threw for at least one touchdown: a record**. All-time passing leader with 40,239 yards in 1973. Player of the year '59, '64, '67. Jim Thorpe Award '67.



Courtesy of Graham Spurrier

Steve Spurrier

OTHER NOTABLES

Ernie Bowman — *Baseball.* Johnson City, Tenn. Played for'62 champion New York Giants.

Smokey Burgess — *Baseball.* Born 2-6-27 in Caroleen, N. C. Major league catcher for 18 years. Lifetime league pinch hitter with 145 hits.

Arden Cogar — *Log Cutting.* Webster Springs, W. Va. A 15-time winner of the world log-cutting competition. Has been known to cut a 14-inch log in 29 seconds.

Jimmy Lee Constable — *Baseball.* Born 6-14-33 in Jonesborough, Tenn. Played for New York, Cleveland, Washington, San Francisco and Milwaukee.

Carroll Dale — *Football* . Born in Wise, Va. Played for L.A. Rams '60-'64, Green Bay Packers '65-'72, Minnesota Vikings '73. Pro Bowl '69, '70, '71. Now athletic director at Clinch Valley College, Wise, Va.

(Charlton) Atlee Hammaker — *Baseball.* Born 1-24-58. Lives in Knoxville, Tenn. Left-handed pitcher, switch hitter. Royals '81, Giants '82-'89, Padres '90. Led NL in '83 in ERA. Attended ETSU on basketball scholarship.

Chuck Howley — *Football.* From West Virginia. Chicago Bears '58-'59, Dallas Cowboys '61-'73.

Kieth "Mister" Jennings — *Basketball.* Born 11-2-68 in Culpepper, Va. 5'7". Played at East Tennessee State University '88-'91. Naismith Award '91. First ETSU player to be drafted by NBA (Golden State Warriors '92).

John Kruk — *Baseball.* From Keyser, W.Va. San Diego '86 - '88 and Philadelphia '89 to present. In '92 batted .323 and finished third in the NL. Quoted as saying to a booster, "Lady, I'm not an athlete. I'm a baseball player."

Johnnie Lee LeMaster — *Baseball.* Born 6-19-54 in Paintsville, Ky. Played shortstop for 22 games in 1975 for San Francisco hitting .189 and slugging .324.

Earl Lloyd — *Basketball.* Played for West Virginia State College. The first black player signed by the NBA '50. Washington '51. Syracuse '53-'58. Detroit '59-'60. Assistant coach, scout, broadcaster. Coached '72-'73.

Joe McClain — *Baseball.* Player and official. Won a baseball scholarship to the University of Tennessee and went on to pitch for the Washington Senators.

Tracy Stallard — *Baseball.* Born 8-31-37 in Coeburn, Va. Pitcher for Boston in 1961, helped set the single season record for home runs by throwing Yankee Roger Maris his 61st homerun pitch.

Calvin Talford — *Basketball; Baseball.* Born 10-7-68 in Castlewood, Va. ETSU Buccaneer was 1992 NCAA slam-dunk champion. Played baseball for Philadelphia Phillies' Martinsville, Va., farm club. Now playing basketball in Austria.

Ed Whitson — *Baseball.* From Erwin, Tenn. Pitcher for San Diego Padres.

Courtesy of University Relations, ETSU

Calvin Talford

Compiled by Laurene Scalf with assistance from Bob Barnett, John Cathey, Steven Giles, Jack Higgs, Debby Jennings, Charles Moore, Stephen Patrick, Patrick Sloan, Graham Spurrier, Frieda Souder, Cora Teel, John Veasey , Earl Yates, ***A History of Sports in North Carolina*** *by Jim L. Sumner, 1990,* ***Sports in West Virginia*** *by Doug Huff, 1979,* ***Pioneers of Black Sport*** *by Ocaria Chalk, 1975,* ***American Women in Sport, 1882-1987*** *by Sparhawk, Leslie, Turbow and Rose, 1989,* ***Star Quarterbacks of the NFL*** *by Bill Libby, 1970, et. al.*

Janice Shelton

A Woman's Place 1992: A.D.

New Year's Day 1991 was a red-letter day for Janice Shelton and for East Tennessee State University. On that day Shelton became the first woman to be athletics director at ETSU, one of only six women in the country directing an NCAA Division I athletic program and the only one in the Appalachian region. "Four were in schools which did not have football," Shelton says, "which is more typical. And two at schools with 1-AA football programs. Now there are eight of us. Two women became athletic directors just this year in major 1-A football programs — Barbara Hedges at University of Washington and Merrily Baker at Michigan State." A Division I school has a major college sports program. The difference among A and AA and AAA is in the amount of money involved in the football program. "AA and AAA schools don't have eight million dollars a year to spend on football," says Shelton. Division II schools offer some athletic scholarships, and Division III schools do not. This year saw the appointment of the first female president of the NCAA Division III: Judy Sweet at University of California, San Diego. "Most of us have been in athletics 15-25 years," says 48-year-old Shelton. "It usually doesn't take men that long to reach higher levels of administration."

In 1972, Title IX of the Education Amendment Act prohibited sex discrimination in sports by an institution which receives federal funds. The act was a two-edged sword, says Shelton. "There were more women in administration before Title IX. When the NCAA took in women's programs, they were just absorbed into the men's programs and a lot of directors of women's athletics lost their jobs. The number of women coaches dropped from about 75 percent to 30 percent. As women's sports became more important, more men applied to coach."

A Danville, Ky., native, Shelton coached basketball and volleyball at Georgetown College in Kentucky before she came to ETSU in 1968. " I came here as a first-hired women's basketball coach. That means I was hired to be the coach and wasn't just someone picked off the staff to tend the women's team. I was also women's intramural director, a teacher, and supervisor of student teachers at the University school." She became assistant athletics director and coordinator of women's athletics in 1974, was named associate athletics director in 1980 and became interim director of athletics in May of 1990.

Under her direction, over 25 conference, state and regional tournaments have been held at ETSU in basketball, gymnastics, tennis, track and field and volleyball. She is chairwoman of the NCAA Women's Basketball Rules Committee and was the first chairwoman of the Southern Conference Women's Administrators. During her tenure, the Southern Conference received its first automatic bid to the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Tournament and the conference chose Johnson City, Tenn.'s, Freedom Hall Civic Center as the permanent site for the women's tournament.

She received the ETSU Distinguished Staff Award in 1987 and the 1991 Altrusa Club Honorarium Award for Women in Industry. She also received the 1991 National Association of Collegiate Women Athletics Administrators NCAA District III Administrator-of-the-Year Award.

An associate professor, she previously taught sport psychology, a subject Shelton thinks deserves more attention. "It's the study of motivation, profiles of superior athletes, certain behaviors in competition, assertive-aggressive behaviors, anxiety. It's not a requirement for the study of sports medicine, but it should be. We need to do more training of coaches in this area. Three-fourths of what coaches deal with is human behavior — how much to arouse an athlete. You can arouse them to the point of being ineffective."

Her position now precludes teaching. She says she eats and breathes ETSU sports. "This is a 26-hours-a-day job." She pauses, then laughs. "This is not a job; it's a life."

— Laurene Scalf

Mowing

I've justified my
existence for today,
paved a green path
to freedom,
helped preserve the
middle class,
won the approval of my
neighbors.

I remember my first house:
before I could afford a mower
I blasted weeds with
my pitching wedge,
dandelions dancing,
divots flying,
striking
my neighbor's
stolid Volvo.

— Randy Oakes

Randy Oakes recently moved from Phoenix, Ariz., back to his roots in Greensboro, N.C. His stories "Baptismal" and "Young Republican" have appeared in ***Now and Then****.*

Frank Soos

The Team We Got

Poca's on the hardwood; the hardwood's hot —
We can't lose with the team we got.

A couple of years ago I was walking along Water Street, and I saw a kid playing at the basketball goal behind the Baptist Church. He wore an old Poca jersey, number 40. Forty was my old number; I'd worn that very jersey with the black and white checked piping around the arm and neck holes. Before me, Randy Slater, a guy with a soft turn around jump shot, wore it. And on the bulletin board at my dad's store was an old picture of another guy on a team from the '50s, just after we moved to the new school and big new gym, a guy I didn't know wearing my number, my shirt, posing with his teammates and the District VII trophy. Like the Phantom in the funny papers, we were all stacked up together in that same jersey — sitting on the bench in it, fouling out in it, wadding it up and throwing it across the locker room, taking it home to Mom to wash before the next game.

If sport teaches character, as my mother believed when she washed our practice gear and uniforms, you learn it when you lose.

The first basketball game I remember clearly was Pocahontas versus the Big Creek Owls in 1962. The gym was full. People, mostly men, mostly the same men that loafed around the bridge on Saturdays, or in the Cricket's pool room, were standing down around the ends of the bleachers, almost rounding off the corners of the court. When the ball came their way, everybody squeezed back. It was hot. The high windows steamed up, and then water ran and dripped off them; the cinder block walls steamed and dripped too. The FairPlay clock turned red in its face the last two minutes of play and so did all us people watching. With Big Creek, the game was always close. I remember the heat, the fearful hope for our team in those last seconds, the clutch free throws; I remember the players sweating, their shirt tails out. And I remember we won. It seemed like we always won then.

I'm thinking of *The Iliad* now and of the big illustrated children's edition in my elementary school library, a beautiful book with drawings after the figures on Grecian urns. I read and reread that book in 1962 when I was in the sixth grade. I remember the illustration for the funeral of Hector, the women in their long black drapes, the men in breastplates and greaves, the horsehair plumes on their helmets. There was a smoky wash over the whole scene, and Hector was nothing but a dark lump on his stretcher. I'm not sure *The Iliad* was such good reading for me because it encouraged me to look up from that book and see the life of a small town like Pocahontas played out in dramatic confrontations, big climaxes, definite conclusions. Maybe, though, every little town has its moments of hope and of subsequent shortcoming, a story where its own people are momentarily taller, greater, or at least seem to be for a while.

It was possible then to watch West Virginia University on channel six, or maybe an ACC game on channel 10. Even though these were the glory years for WVU, the games that came through in grainy black and white on the TV set didn't interest me. Pocahontas basketball did. "Race horse ball," my dad called it, usually irritated by a full court pass that sailed over everybody's head and hit the far wall, a fast break that ended in a tangle of arms and legs and the ball rolling loose. I didn't know much then about the ins and outs of basketball; what I saw was drama. Called fouls were met with stony stares or passionate denials. Players often ran against the walls under the baskets; sometimes they were pushed. They fought. Fathers and brothers came down out of the stands to confront the officials or the other team. Games often ended with both teams being shoved toward their locker rooms by referees and coaches.

At that time there was always a high school kid working in my dad's store. The first one I remember was Charlie Sabo, who could flip imaginary quarters into the air and catch them with a plop in an open paper sack. Then Ducky Sayko played his rocking beat on the counter tops and shopping carts whenever business was slack; Ethel Shell, the high petroleum kid, helped me with my saxophone. The next was Van Gentry.

Van had his trick, too. He tossed an orange back into the crook of his elbow and popped it back to his open hand. He didn't kid or tell outrageous stories like Ducky and Charlie had. Van did his work, stocking the shelves, by simply flipping the cans out of their cartons and spinning them into place, carrying the orders out to the truck and sliding them with a snap of his wrist down the bed. It was just the same old store work, but he was the first one who ever made it look graceful.

Van Gentry wore 44. Whether it was an accident or a choice, I don't know. It was, of course, the number of Jerry West, of Rod Thorn, a number a good ballplayer would wear; it brought a kind of expectation. After Van wore it, a not-so-hot guy

named Allen Hale had it for a season and then Harrell Erwin. Harrell drove the baseline like a train and would knock you on your butt if the need or opportunity came along.

❍

I don't think there is a county tournament anymore, but a sign remains. Today, whether you're driving in from Abbs Valley or over the hill from Bluefield or Bramwell, you'll see a bright orange disk painted to look like a basketball, "Tazewell County Champs, 1972," the year I finished college, the year after my brother finished high school. Dinky Reid played on that team, Joe Shrader, Tommy Howell, Chris Jackson. Chris is dead now; it had something to do with his being a diabetic and getting the wrong medication. That sign, the banquet the Lions Club put on for us win or lose, the black blazers with Indian heads on the pocket the town bought for the team when they went to state were the ways we knew basketball mattered.

What mattered to us was being able to wear our orange and black corduroy jacket up to the football games at Mitchell Stadium in Bluefield, walking around the whole ball game so people saw us and saw where we came from. If you'd stopped at a Bluefield gas station and asked for directions to our town, chances are nobody could have helped you. The mines were closed; the N&W used our tracks to store their empties. But when people saw our jackets, they knew who we were.

❍

For everybody in Pocahontas my age and older, I remain a little bit of myself as number 40. A tall kid who could have done more, who should have done better. Once I tried to explain my basketball self to our local auto body man as we worked on my truck. "I remember when you played," he told me, and his voice held a little compassion, some exasperation and disgust.

My mother told us, "It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game." My brother and I believed her. I became our team's designated talker — the guy who went out and promised the refs there'd be no more fights, no more technical fouls. I shook hands after the game regardless of outcome and never threw a punch, an intentional elbow or an ugly phrase in my high school career.

Being number 40 was a choice. When the time came for the coach to give the uniforms out my first varsity season, I both wanted number 44 and knew I could not wear it. Despite Harrell Erwin's fierce stamp on it, it was Van's number to me. And to me, Van Gentry remains the finest basketball player I think I've ever seen play.

He was part of a fine team. Ray Hypes was at one guard, quick, a good passer off the break, a good shooter from the head of the key. Benny Murphy was at the other — there were other Murphys, Porter, Diz, Bill. All of them could shoot from anywhere, all of them had the lightest of touch. Beefy Whittington and Gary Bradner were in the front court. Both of them had terrible tempers, both argued with the refs constantly and picked at the other team. Van was the center, I guess, though he seemed to be everywhere; he seemed to be able to move with ease from wing to corner to post. I thought he owned the floor, owned Pocahontas itself. I saw him driving off to pick up his date in his dad's gray Chevy and knew he was the model of everything I might be. I followed him around my dad's store like a pup, working up my courage to ask him questions, "Can you dunk it?" What I really wanted to know was what I could do to become just like him.

Part of the answer to the last question had to do with Lucas. Lucas was our coach. He did what every good coach can; he got a bunch of unsure, cocky, lazy, love-struck, jittery boys to do his bidding. He made them win by making them forget about themselves until they couldn't do it anymore and would blow up. Then everybody would settle down and start up winning again. He kept the gym open in the summer, and when he left to be an elementary principal just before my sophomore season, none of us knew what to do.

❍

It would be easy to make Van's story with its petty ironies and final disappointment into a little *Iliad*. Because his team didn't win a state championship, though many, including my usually skeptical dad, thought they could. It all went to hell when Ray Hypes, the clever and ambidextrous point guard, was found ineligible and the team's record went from 12-0 to 0-12 in a day; when Van quit the team in a losing game at Richlands and had to beg his way back on; and finally when he fell and tore cartilage in his knee scoring his thousandth career point in a game that wasn't even close. He wasn't pushed; he just turned and fell. Later we all learned the score keeper had made a mistake in adding the old score sheets; it hadn't been his thousandth point after all.

I cannot explain what I saw as his greatness. I outgrew his hand-me-downs, including his varsity sweater with the knitted-in letterman's band, when I was just a ninth grader. But he was strong, at ease in his body. He was all-district and all-county and all-area, and he got letters of interest from the best basketball schools around — WVU, Virginia Tech and Davidson College — when he was still a player with two good knees and good grades. Other people who were older and had more basketball sense saw some of the things I saw in Van.

❍

In part, my struggle is with scale. Back then TV was weak, small and distant. Great teams like Duke and Kentucky and West Virginia were outside any realm we could imagine. Poca High School with its big blonde floor, its black and orange Indian chief at center court, its ritual cheers and warm-up customs was immediate and real. Every game a manager ran out with a small orange blanket and put it down to receive the warm-up jackets of the team as they went through lay-ups and then jump shots of impossibly great range, making it seemed like a dozen in a row.

At Northfork, they had to stop the game when the train went by. The building shook, and a fine snow of coal fell from the rafters. At Bramwell, the teachers and town leaders sat on a stage along the far side of the court like gods. At Whitewood a sign hung above the ticket-taker's table, "Check your gun here." It was an all-white school in an all-white county. My black teammates got quiet when we crossed the county line. We didn't know how to talk about it and didn't. When a man pulled me off the floor by the front of my satin warm-up jacket and said,

"You play with niggers?" I said, "Yes sir."

Northfork has no team, no school, not now. In the '70s, they won more state titles in a row than any school in the country. Bramwell has been consolidated out of existence, too. Their 1967 27-0 state title team beat the daylights out of us twice. The town put up a life-size picture of the team by the trophy case, never imagining they'd win it several more times. Not anymore. Whitewood's school is still there. Pocahontas too, though there are always rumors.

It's not exactly a failing economy and a shrinking population. It's not exactly Michael and Magic and Larry. But TV reception is better, and the games you see there are somehow more real and make more of a demand to be taken into account. The state scoring titles of Tommy Howell and Ronnie Kennedy seem frail accomplishments by comparison. Our gym floor no longer seems like an ocean of bright wood. Our noise is a puny noise.

❍

My team lost to Whitewood in 1968, my senior season, in double overtime. It was a hard place to play — the gym was short with a stage under one basket. People sat so close that their feet stuck out on the floor. Occasionally they tripped you. Occasionally, they flipped a rebound out of your grasp from the stage. The water had too much iron for drinking. At halftime the locker room door swung open, and a case of Cokes skidded in.

I remember where I was when the last shot went up — on the wrong side of the basket for the rebound. Several on our team had fouled out. Robert Howell had gotten a technical for swinging an elbow. When it was over, he and William Johnson were back to back in the middle of the court surrounded by Whitewood fans. Coach, and I pulled them out and made it to the locker room. For just a night we were as close as we would ever get to a real Pocahontas basketball team. We had played together; we had played well. But a real Poca team would have made that last shot.

There's a limit to how many times you can lose and still believe winning is possible. If sport teaches character, as my mother believed when she washed our practice gear and uniforms, you learn it when you lose. You find out you still have to get up in the morning, go to school, make another practice, get ready for the next game. To see it through with dignity.

❍

Van carried himself well. He came to work on time after the road trips, stayed polite like he was raised to be. He even got up from his hospital bed and made his comeback. The heavy brace seemed to touch him with mortality, but he didn't seem to notice. He played his ball and did his work. In the store, he and Gary Bradner agreed to stop their smoking for tournament play.

At Whitewood a sign hung above the ticket taker's table, "Check your gun here." It was an all-white school in an all-white county. My black teammates got quiet when we crossed the county line.

Maybe from these short scenes you can see a bunch of hungry kids wrestling with themselves and their coach to be something greater than the place the little town they grew up in had set aside for them. But you would be mistaken. In *The Iliad*, Achilles had the chance to bargain with the gods for his chance at greatness. But there he sat in his tent, pouting over a temple girl as the Greeks were driven back to their ships. Can even the great see the shape of their greatness when they are caught up in it?

Despite all the forfeits and the fights, Van's team still managed to get into the District tournament and then into the tournament finals. Everybody from Pocahontas went down to see them play because it might just happen. They might go to state, they might go all the way. They should have after what all those boys, especially Van, had been through. But they didn't. Pocahontas lost to a pretty good team from Lebanon.

After my team had lost to a bad team at Dungannon, we got back on the bus and tried not to notice the looks of pity or scorn from the cheerleaders. We sat in the back, and after a while we started singing. We lost every game but one that year, and singing made us feel better. Sid Harmon, who'd driven the team to the state tournament in 1965, was driving, and he pulled the bus off the road and turned on the interior lights. "I'll be damned if I'd be singing if I just played the way you all did," he told us and pulled back onto the road. We rode the rest of the way home in the silent dark.

There are other ways of losing. We tried those: fouling out, fighting among ourselves and against the other team. Quitting. If you couldn't win, maybe you could just sit in study hall and glare at the teacher, get in fights in the lunchroom over girls, buy an old car and fix it up.

Van tried college awhile, Roanoke College, a pretty good basketball school then and now. Then he followed his brother into the Air Force. Sometime between my eighth grade year and junior year, while he was stationed in England, Van had a motorcycle wreck. The bikers joke that if you get hit on the highway, you better hope you die before you reach the ground. Van didn't die. He was paralyzed from the waist down.

He came to see us play once. They wheeled him in and put him at the end of the bleachers under the score box. The gym wasn't crowded. I'm not sure the other guys knew who he was. Sitting there in his long blonde hair, beard, wrap-around sun glasses, he looked like a hippie. We'd never seen one in Pocahontas.

I remember only one play of the 32 minutes. I stepped out of position and blocked a shot, threw the ball the length of the floor perfectly to William Johnson who'd slipped down the court for an easy lay-up. But overall, we played badly. I played badly, and still we won. Van disappeared while I was being a good sport and shaking hands with the losers. I have never seen him again. Having failed at the one thing I could have done for

CATS

have big bony heads, and skin
— not scales — slick as a dogwood hoehandle.
Their eyes, though soft as grapes, shine

like blue marbles. Hoboes, they live under bridges,
or in the trailer parks of lakes and rivers.
Caring only how a situation smells,

cats poke about in muddy waters,
street people sifting through trash in dumpsters.
When they work, they operate backhoes

or bulldoze garbage in municipal landfills,
then hang out in underwater pool halls.
They tap your line with all the confidence

of a deputy sheriff bearing a warrant, rapping
on your door. Larcenous, they rip off
your monofilament by the yard. Horsed

to shore, they wrestle you in the rocks, stab
you with a hidden shiv. And yet, when eaten
back of an RV by lake or river

by guys wearing CAT hats, their meat's
sweet as their disposition's mean and ugly.

— Jim Wayne Miller

*Jim Wayne Miller is a poet, novelist and playwright. His play **His First, Best Country** was produced this year by Horse Cave Theatre in Kentucky.*

The Team We Got *(continued)*

him, to play well, what's left for me to do now?

Somehow what I saw in his play never made its way to my fingertips and legs. Maybe it had something to do with Lucas, our coach, leaving. I think we all believed that. It doesn't change anything. I fouled out of my last game in the district tournament against Whitewood. The same team we'd taken to double overtime two months earlier beat us badly. By then we were all sick of it.

On my first Thanksgiving in college, I rode the bus to Bluefield and then thumbed the last nine miles home, walking the last mile from Stroupsville. When I rounded the curve at the cemetery, I saw our town the way those players from Whitewood or Dungannon or Big Creek must have seen it. With its board and batten houses settled under the slate dump, Pocahontas was another coal camp, another wide spot in the road at the end of a cramped bus ride.

"It's just a game," my mom would say. I believed that too. It was easier for me than for the others. I knew when I stepped off the court for the last time there would be other things for me — college, some kind of career I hadn't thought of yet. Basketball had not been my only chance to make my mark. Still, and to my surprise, I have not been able to shuck it off so easily. It was never just a game. In a dresser drawer in my parents' attic is one hand-me-down Van's mother gave me, his old jersey from his Air Force team, number 44.

Frank Soos teaches English and creative writing at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and writes short stories and essays.

The Batter from Garrett

All that mattered
to the batter from Garrett
standing tall at the plate
was to hit the ball solid
and determine his fate ...

The hurler squinted for the sign
and winding threw
a twisty curveball spirallin ' blue...
The ash mashed hard
and off the pitcher 's cap flew
as the ball split the middle
straight, long and true ...

Groun 'poundin ' for that first
green diamond hue
the batter from Garrett decided
to dig for two...
the centerfielder, who'd shaded 'm right,
angled the bangle off the wall
and whirled with his might
the second sacker gripped the ball
and applied the tag
as the umpire yelled, "Batter it 's yo 'bag."

The crowd roared loudly
as the runner shook off his shirt,
he then sized up the defense
and took plenty o 'dirt ...

Now the hurler looked 'round
& gave 'm a bead
and was amazed allagoggy by 'z big lead ...
He whirligigged the pearly
like a tornadoin ' peachtree stick
but the runner was thirdbound
and blazed it quicker 'n crowpicks.

The pitcher, who by now was mad
as a bull buzzin' bee,
bellowed and stomped the mound
an ' sed u ain 't makin ' no fool o ' me.
So he menacingly eyeballed the runner at 3
and sailed the ball over the backstop
into a Mizzooy jalopy...

Well-now the hometeam hooted
and whooped it up with glee
as the batter from Garrett
winked and came home Kentucky free ...

— Michael G. Johnson

Michael Johnson lives in Hindman, Ky. This poem is dedicated to his father, Grayson Johnson, who taught him to play pepper with the Eagles at second base and took him to Crosley Field to see the great Pirate, Roberto Clemente.

Marie Tedesco

Appalachia Becomes Mainstream

From Down-Home Baseball to the Rookie League

There are still log-rollings, house raisings, house-warmings, corn shuckings and quiltings. Sports are still the same — as they have been for a hundred years — wrestling, racing, jumping and lifting barrels. Brutally savage fights are still common in which the combatants strike, kick, bite and gouge until one is ready to cry "enough."

John Fox Jr.
The Southern Mountaineer (1901)

There was some truth to John Fox Jr.'s description of sport in the Southern Mountains in 1901. But by the turn of the century, Southern Appalachian sports encompassed more than the crude activities described by Fox. At least one team sport, baseball, had been played in Southern Appalachia since the 1870s when numerous towns in Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia established teams. Baseball aficionados in Southwest Virginia established a league in 1885. That same year saw the birth of the Southern League which included teams from the Appalachian regions of North Carolina and Tennessee.

Teams in small towns such as Johnson City, Tenn., were a source of pride, especially in the early 20th century when the local paper covered club exploits in the colorful, sometimes quaint sports language of the day. The Johnson City club joined the Appalachian League upon its founding in 1911, and thus the story of the city's team is intertwined with the fortunes of that league.

The team's fortunes reflected a number of national and regional socioeconomic trends. These trends, in turn, had a significant impact on the course of minor league baseball. The evolution of the team from a unique, "down home" club to a rookie league feeder, which exists only to serve the major league masters, parallels the fate of certain aspects of Appalachian culture which have lost their distinctiveness to the master of mass culture.

Baseball derived from the English game of rounders and attained popularity in the urban Northeast from 1830 to 1860. It was a game played by young boys, upper and upper middle-class "gentlemen" and prosperous members of the middle class. After the Civil War, the urban game of baseball spread to Midwestern cities which had grown up as a result of industrialization. The game also gained popularity in more rural areas. Individuals who had become familiar with baseball during the Civil War had brought it back to their home towns, and rural fairs championed the game. The great Eastern clubs also toured the Midwest and South promoting baseball as they played local nines. The game began attracting members of all socioeconomic classes, with middle and working-class youth alike becoming devotees.

The prevalence of the game in the 1880s is not surprising, for industrial growth and expansion during that decade produced both a leisure middle class which could watch and play baseball and a working class which perhaps saw baseball as a welcome relief from industrial work. The sport achieved such popularity that the 1880s became known as baseball's first "golden age."

Johnson City, Tenn., was one of the cities that experienced both industrial growth and the great baseball boom. By 1890 the population reached 4,645, a 500 percent increase from the 685 of 1880. The town had begun life in 1854 when Henry Johnson built a storehouse at the junction of the route of the proposed East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad and the southwest corner of Stage Road (present-day Market Street), which ran from Elizabethton to Jonesborough. As the rail line became operational, trains stopped to take on water at "Johnson's Tank" when trains stopped to load and unload passengers and freight.

Spurred by the completion in 1882 of the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad, Johnson City, as the town had come to be called, experienced tremendous economic growth during the 1880s. Entrepreneurs established new industries (e.g. tanning and extract, foundry and machine works) which the railroads made possible because of the town's accessibility to transportation. Retail stores, the first newspaper and the first bank soon followed the establishment of these industries.

Johnson City's economic boom followed both national and regional trends. The United States in the 1880s had emerged from the hard times caused by the Panic of 1873 and had begun to put aside the divisiveness of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

By 1886 Johnson City had a baseball team called the "Reds"— so named perhaps in deference to the Cincinnati Red Stockings and the Boston Red Stockings,

The evolution of the team from a unique, "down home" club to a rookie league feeder, existing only to serve the major league master, parallels the fate of certain aspects of Appalachian culture which have lost their distinctiveness to the master of mass culture.

Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University

Johnson City's first team, the Reds, pictured here in 1886.

two of early baseball's most successful professional teams. What happened to this early Johnson City team is not known. In the 1890s, Johnson City fielded another team informally called the "Kids." This team "crossed bats" frequently with a Bristol, Tenn. (or Virginia), team also called the "Kids."

It was not until 1910 with the formation of the Class D Southeastern League that a Johnson City team played in a professional league. This team carried the nickname "Soldiers," after the Old Soldiers Home (now Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center).

The team began strongly. "Soldiers Open In Form," "Taylor and Burleson It," said *The Comet* for June 16, 1910. "If This Lick Is Kept Up the Pennant Will Float in the Breeze Here at the End of the Season." But the "lick" could not be maintained, and the team began to falter. Young playing manager Dave Taylor, son of future governor of Tennessee Alf Taylor (1921-23), tried to find explanations for the Soldiers' poor performances. On one occasion Taylor claimed, "We never could win on Monday because the sacred songs the boys hear at church the day before are ringing in their ears." On another occasion, however, the manager observed, "The boys were all sober. Probably that is the reason they lost." Umpires, too, allegedly contributed to the downfall of the Soldiers. "Two Games Gone To The Bad. Account of the Umpire. Both of Them Forfeited. Manager Taylor Takes Soldiers Off the Grounds Rather Than Be Destroyed By Umpire," read the newspaper headlines for September 5. For whatever reasons, the Soldiers tumbled from first early in the season to third at season's end. The Knoxville Appalachians captured the 1910 Southeastern League pennant.

After the 1910 campaign, the Southeastern League underwent a metamorphosis. A dispute over which team to include in a new eight-team Southeastern League split organizers into Northern and Southern factions. The Northern faction became the Appalachian League, while the Southern retained the name Southeastern.

The Johnson City team, which kept the moniker "Soldiers," opened the season with a new ballfield and high expectations. "Great Team Is Selected," "Captain Garner is Well-Satisfied With the Bunch of Beauties And Starts For The Rag," read the *Comet* headlines for May 18, 1911. "Well, they're at it at last," declared the *Comet* article. "The baseball boys strutted out to the ball ground in the Carter Addition yesterday afternoon, and then sprinted back to town; and then bummed around town with their chests stuck out just to show that a little thing like that didn't have any damaging effect on their muscles, even this early in the season."

By the end of the season the Johnson City boys strutted some more as the team copped the pennant. The *Comet* gleefully proclaimed news of the team's success in front page headlines on September 14: "The battle is over, The pennant is won. Johnson City wins the rag in a run. Talk about your stars and stripes. And the sainted stars and bars. The pennant is the greatest flag, That floats beneath the stars."

Two years later the Johnson City nine again won the pennant, albeit in odd fashion. The season was split, with Johnson City taking the first half and the Knoxville Pioneers the second half. A seven-game playoff series was scheduled to determine the league champion. But the teams played only three games. The first three contests of the series took place in Knoxville, where in the third game a Johnson City player was spiked. Threats of reprisal when the series moved to Johnson City convinced a number of Pioneers to forego the trip to the Soldiers' home town. The Soldiers won three games by forfeit and thus won the pennant.

Neither Johnson City nor Bristol played in the league in 1914. By the end of June the Appalachian circuit disbanded, the victim, no doubt, of shaky finances. From 1914 through 1918 the Great War dominated news pages. Papers carried very little sports news of any kind. By 1921, however, with the war over and prosperity returning to the nation, Americans again turned their attention to sport. Major league baseball rebounded from the 1919 Chicago "Black Sox" scandal, which saw some members of that team conspire to throw the World Series to the underdog Cincinnati Reds, and entered its second "golden age." The 1920s was the era of the "Sultan of Swat," Babe Ruth, and his Yankee teammates.

The Appalachian League was ready to resume play in 1921 with six teams. Once

again the Soldiers took the field in Johnson City. Beginning in 1922 the team had a new home at Wilder Park, which sported a center field fence of chicken wire and burlap. Only modestly successful in the early 1920s, the team apparently had problems with prima donna players. In 1923, when new manager Jack Ryan took over the team, he promised, "We'll run the club like a real club should be run, and I won't allow any bulldozing going on among the players, regardless of how good a player is."

At the close of the 1924 season, the Johnson City team encountered financial difficulties. The owner, L.E. Moody, agreed that if citizens could raise $2,000 to meet league start-up fees, uniform costs and the like, then the team could join the circuit. But Johnson Citians could not raise the necessary funds. Prospective manager Frank Moffitt said that it seemed "almost ludicrous" that Johnson City could not raise the monies. This was especially so, he said, for a town which had been "boasting of its civic pride and heralding itself as the gateway of the Appalachians and the foremost city of East Tennessee.

In any case, financial woes caused the Appalachian League to shut down in July of 1925. Although the Appy League failed, the number of minor leagues nationwide increased in the 1920s, from 13 at the beginning of the decade to 25 at the end.

The primary reason the Appalachian League did not share in baseball's prosperity in the 1920s was the depressed condition of the economy in Southern Appalachia. Shortage of cash spelled doom for teams which relied on the subscription method (i.e., getting funds from local individuals and businesses) to keep afloat. Both agriculture and timber, mainstays of the economy in the Southern Mountains, were in decline. In turn, manufacturing industries which relied on timber also suffered. Although the 1920s saw increased industrialization of Southern Appalachia, the Depression of the 1930s hit before industrialization could spur a reversal of economic fortunes.

After the death of the Appy League, baseball continued in Appalachian cities. Independent teams from East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia competed among themselves. Many who had played for the Appy League entries also played for these independent teams.

The Great Depression of the 1930s took its toll on both major and minor league baseball. The minors were especially hard hit, however, because many teams had shaky financial backing even before the Depression. Of the 25 minor leagues which survived the 1929 season, only 21 lasted through 1930 and 16 through 1931. The National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, the minors' governing body, instituted financial reforms, encouraged night baseball and actively promoted minor league ball. As a result, the number of leagues began to increase. By 1934 there were 19, and by 1938 there were 37 leagues.

A minor league official Ray Ryan resuscitated the old Appalachian League. A "new" Appalachian League debuted in 1937 with four teams: Johnson City, Elizabethton and Newport, Tenn., and Pennington Gap, Va. A year after the Johnson City Soldiers returned to action in the new Appalachian League, the St. Louis Cardinals purchased the team. Johnson City became the sixth Class D club and the 15th farm team overall in Cardinal president Branch Rickey's farm team empire.

The purchase of hometown teams by major league clubs marked the end of an era for baseball in small towns. Teams became geared exclusively to producing players for the majors. If a player could not make it at Class D, there would be another rookie ready to take his place. Gone were the days when a player could spend his entire baseball career with a Class D club.

The Appalachian League survived World War II with four teams: Johnson City, Bristol, Kingsport and Elizabethton. The end of the war signaled a return to baseball prosperity for both major and minor leagues. In 1949, 59 minor leagues in 464 cities attracted a record high of 41 million fans. It appeared that post-war prosperity also would bestow its blessings on the Appalachian League. The year after the war ended, the circuit expanded from four to eight clubs.

By the mid-1950s, however, the minor leagues again found themselves in economic straits. The minors not only competed with major league ball on television, but also with other forms of entertainment and leisure activities of that era. Minor league attendance dropped precipitously. By 1956 the Appalachian League experienced severe financial difficulties as teams struggled with low attendance. Wytheville and Bristol, Va., dropped out of the league. Citing transportation costs and the absence of traditional rivals, both Johnson City and Kingsport, Tenn., refused to operate, with only Bluefield, W.Va., and Salem, Va., as the other league entries. The Appalachian League thus did not operate in 1956.

Returning to action in 1957, the Appy League became a Class D rookie league which played a shortened 70-game schedule. The circuit included one West Virginia entry, the Bluefield Dodgers; three Virginia teams: the Pulaski Cubs, Wytheville Cardinals and Salem Rebels (a Pirates franchise); and two Tennessee entries: the Kingsport Orioles and the

Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University

Alf Taylor, governor of Tennessee, on the Mountain Home baseball field circa 1910-1920.

Johnson City Phillies. The league was successful, drawing 105,850 fans that year.

Overall, however, minor league ball continued to suffer in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1956 major league teams, fearing a further shrinkage in the supply of players, began to subsidize minor league baseball. In 1962 major league moguls devised the Player Development Plan, which reorganized the minors into AAA, AA, A, Rookie Leagues and Instructional Leagues. Each major league team agreed to finance at least five minor league clubs. The major league, or "parent" club, subsidized salaries, travel expenses and equipment costs.

Because of the changed structure of the minor leagues, individual teams lost their unique character. Absent are long-time local players and residents. Because the minors' purpose is to develop players for the majors, it is difficult for players to spend their careers playing for one minor league team. This is impossible on a rookie team.

Today, the Johnson City Cardinals is a typical rookie league team located in a small city. The club generates some interest among residents (1985 attendance was 12,000) and the local media. Long-time local players and residents such as the governor's son Dave Taylor are gone from the scene as the team devotes itself completely to player development for the parent team. Gone also are such quaint customs as holding special dinners and fairs to raise money to support the local ball club.

For the Appalachian League the loss of distinction parallels a process underway in the Appalachian region. Long noted for its folk culture and the handmade folk crafts and arts produced by this culture, Appalachia, too, has become integrated into a mass culture which prizes homogeneity, not uniqueness. Items allegedly handmade in the region, for instance, frequently are no more than mass-produced commodities made of synthetic, not natural materials. Folk crafts and arts, succumbing to the master of mass culture, are losing their distinctive, regional identity. They are not truly unique. Neither, anymore, are the Johnson City Soldiers.

Rounding First in Appalachia

In the summer of 1980, a sportscaster at WKPT-TV in Kingsport, Tenn., went to a Kingsport Mets game, expecting to give it the cursory coverage that a one-man sports department can afford. He was so impressed by a young base stealer on the team that he returned next day to produce a feature story on the player. The player's name was ***Daryl Strawberry****, who, in 1983, would join the New York Mets and be named National League Rookie of the Year. He was on the National League All-Star Team from 1984 to 1988 and contributed to the Mets' 1986 World Series championship.*

Strawberry is not the only major league player to have come through the Appalachian League and probably not the only one whose bright future was evident to a small-town crowd sitting on metal bleachers and squinting through the evening sunlight to watch young men who might sink into obscurity or who might be shooting stars passing through on their way to the majors. Here are just a few of the shooting stars.

Orlando Cepeda

Salem, Va. '55. San Francisco Giants '58-'65. Rookie of the Year '58. St. Louis Cardinals '66-'68. Atlanta Braves '69-'71. Boston Red Sox '72-'73. Kansas City '74-'75. Career records: .297 batting average, 2,351 hits, 417 doubles, 27 triples, 379 home runs, 1,131 runs scored, 1,365 RBIs, 142 bases stolen. National League Most Valuable Player '67.

Vince Coleman

Johnson City, Tenn. St. Louis Cardinals '85-'90. NY Mets since '90. National League All-Star Team '88.

Dwight Gooden

Kingsport, Tenn. '82. NY Mets '84 to present. National League All-Star Team '84-'86, '88. Pitcher of the Year, Carolina League '83. National League Rookie of the Year '84. National League Rookie Pitcher of the Year '84. National League Cy Young award '85. First major league pitcher to record 200 strikeouts in each of his first three seasons.

Albert "Sparky" Lyle

Bluefield, W.Va. '64. Boston Red Sox '67-'72. NY Yankees '72-'78. Texas Rangers '78-'80. Philadelphia Phillies '80-'82. Chicago White Sox '82. Fireman of the Year award '72. Cy Young award '77. World Series '76-'78.

Dale Murphy

Kingsport, Tenn. '74. Outfielder for Atlanta Braves '76. Philadelphia Phillies 1990. National League All-Star Game '80, '82-'86-'87. National League Most Valuable Player '82, '83. Gold Glove award '82-'86. Lou Gehrig Memorial award '85.

Eddie Murray

Bluefield, W.Va. '73. Hit .287 with 11 home runs. Baltimore Orioles since '77. American League Rookie of the Year '77. Gold Glove awards '82-'84. All-Star Team '78, '81-'86. World Series '79, '83. Most Valuable Oriole '78, '81-'82, '84.

Al Oliver

Began career in Salem, Va. in '64 but did not play. Pittsburgh Pirates '69-'77. World Series '71. Texas Rangers '78-'82. Montreal Expos '82-'83. San Francisco Giants '84. Philadelphia Phillies '84. Los Angeles Dodgers '85. Toronto Blue Jays '85. Career records: 2743 hits, 529 doubles, .303 batting average, 1,189 runs scored, 1,326 RBIs, 77 triples, 219 home runs, 84 bases stolen.

Kirby Puckett

Elizabethton, Tenn. Minnesota Twins since '84. American League All-Star Team '86-'89. World Series championship team '91.

Cal Ripken Jr.

Bluefield, W.Va. Baltimore. American League Most Valuable Player '83.

Lou Whitaker

Bristol, Tenn. Second baseman for Detroit since '77. American League Rookie of the Year '78. World Series championship team '84. American League All-Star Team '83-'87. Three-time winner of Gold Glove award.

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Winning in the Rural Zone

How Cam Henderson Invented the Zone Defense

by Bob Barnett

Marshall University Archives, Huntington, W. Va.

Early evening January 1, 1948, the Marshall College football team assembled in a locker room in Orlando, Fla., the site of the second annual Tangerine Bowl. There was the usual nervous scrape of cleats on the cement floor. The young men were about to play the biggest game of their careers and the only bowl appearance in Marshall football history.

There was a different feel in the locker room. The players cast furtive looks at the locker room door. Their coach, Eli "Cam" Henderson, wasn't with the team. "We kept expecting the Old Man to walk in even though we knew he was all the way across country," one player recalled.

But head coach Henderson didn't appear, and the Thundering Herd lost that night 7-0 to Catawba College to cap a 9-3 season.

Coach Henderson was in Los Angeles where he had coached the Marshall basketball team to a 46-44 win over Syracuse University for the championship of the Los Angeles Invitational Tournament.

Not only did Henderson coach a Tangerine Bowl football team and a national champion NAIB (now NAIA) basketball team, he won over 611 games (eighth among college coaches) in 36 seasons of college basketball and coached over 151 college football wins. He also invented zone defense, and some believe he developed the three-man fast break as well.

His influence has been so pervasive at Marshall University that Sam Clagg, the former president of Marshall, wrote *The Cam Henderson Story: His Life and Times*. Marshall's 10,000 seat basketball arena is named the Cam Henderson Center in his honor. Yet he has not been accepted by the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. At meetings of sport historians, his name draws blank looks. How can a man accomplish so much and yet remain only a local hero?

Eli Camden Henderson was born on February 5, 1890, in Joetown, a tiny village in the mountains of central West Virginia. A short time later his family moved to a 76-acre farm near Rockcamp Run. Vegetable gardens and fruit trees took up a small portion of the land, but most was in hillside meadows for the horses and a cow or two. A man with a team of horses could hire out to the loggers on the gas fields for ready cash. If he worked hard and was careful, a man could take care of his family. Farm life taught Henderson two of his favorite sayings, "Hard work never killed anyone," and "Did you ever see a fat farmer?"

He attended a one-room school until he was 17. Then, because there was no high school nearby, he went to Waynesburg (Penn.) Academy where he played organized sports. He continued his education at Glenville (W.Va.) State Normal School where he received his two-year teaching certificate. At Glenville he organized and played on the school's first football team and also played basketball and baseball.

Henderson first taught at a one-room elementary school at Cherry Camp Run for $50 a month. With a secure job and money in his pocket, he married Roxie Bell, a former Glenville classmate. The next year he moved to Bristol, where he taught the junior high grades.

After one year at Bristol, Henderson convinced the school board that what the town needed most was a high school, and of course the high school needed a gym. The existing school building could accommodate the 13 new high school students, but the gym was another matter. That summer Henderson enlisted the boys who would be entering the high school,

and they, along with a carpenter, built the gym. Naturally, with the gym came a basketball team. The Clagg biography quotes Henderson explaining why he was so eager to coach: "I wanted to coach principally because I wasn't through playing."

By 1914-15, the school had grown to 25 students with a faculty of five. Henderson at age 24 served as principal, teacher, basketball coach and sometimes center on the basketball team.

By accident that season, Henderson invented the zone defense. Bristol was playing Grafton YMCA at the new Bristol gym. A heavy snow and quick thaw caused leaks in the roof. By half time the floor had developed puddles of water and had become slick. At intermission Henderson sketched out the first zone defense so that his team wouldn't have to chase the Grafton players all over the floor. One of the Grafton players was Clair Bee, who later went on to fame as the coach of Long Island University. Bee repeatedly substantiated the claim that Henderson invented the zone defense.

Henderson never cared who got credit. His scorn for publicity and sports writers was legendary. He worried that his players would get the "big head" from too much publicity, so he did not keep "stats." Sam Clagg recalled that once a season Henderson would show the team a handful of clippings, carefully fold and then shove them down his pants, saying, "Put these in your jock strap, that's where they will do the most good."

"He always worried about spies from other teams," recalled Herb Royer, a player for Henderson at Marshall and later an assistant coach. "That kind of secretiveness or privateness seems to be an Appalachian trait."

At age 26, Henderson enrolled in nearby Salem College to finish his bachelor's degree. While there, he persuaded college officials to start a football team. Of course he played on the team and helped coach. He also played on the Salem basketball and baseball teams.

After receiving his degree, Henderson coached at Shinnston (W.Va) High School, returned to Bristol and then coached at Muskingum (Ohio) College for two seasons. Finally he returned to West Virginia's Davis and Elkins College as football and basketball coach. Elkins was a thriving timber town of 6,788 at the end of a dirt road in mountainous middle West Virginia. Davis and Elkins College was a Presbyterian school of about 200 students with one building, a president's house and no football stadium.

Recruiting was a priority. Henderson concentrated on local small-town and farm boys and rejects from big schools. One of the locals was Forrest Underwood from nearby West Union. "Cam met Joe Pease and me through our high school coach," said Underwood. "He told us that he would accept us with the understanding that if we didn't make the team, we had to go home. And if he thought we were good enough, he would keep us and pay our tuition and board and room. There weren't too many offers so we took it, and both made the team." In addition to the new freshmen, he brought athletes who had played a season or two at large schools and had dropped out. In 12 seasons at Davis and Elkins, his football record was 83-33-6, and his basketball record was 209-44.

What is more amazing was that Davis and Elkins played most of their games on the road, many against major teams. The highlights of Davis and Elkins football were a narrow 14-6 loss to Army in 1925 and the defeat of both West Virginia and Navy on successive weekends in 1928.

The basketball team, playing a zone defense and wide open fast break offense, ranged even further afield. Long eastern tours opened each season, and one memorable tour took the team to games against Kansas State, Nevada, San Jose and St. Mary's of California.

The fame and excitement brought by the Henderson teams was a heady experience for a small college during the prosperity of the 1920s. But the financial problems of the 1930s had a sobering effect, and the subsequent belt tightening caused Henderson to look elsewhere.

At that time Huntington's Marshall College, the state's second largest college with an enrollment in excess of 3,000, was mired in the depths of the Buckeye Conference. Marshall would be a step up for Henderson, though, as the Buckeye Conference included Xavier, Cincinnati, Dayton, Ohio University, Miami and Ohio Wesleyan. But one thing stood between Henderson and the Marshall "friends" who wanted to upgrade the athletic program — the college president.

Marshall's president, Morris Shawkey, was solidly behind the school's popular but unsuccessful coach. In April 1935, however, Shawkey suddenly resigned, citing ill health. Through no chance occurrence, Henderson was hired as Marshall's new head coach at the same meeting of the Board of Education in which James E. Allen was named the new Marshall president. (Allen had been president at Davis and Elkins.) Four months later, Shawkey suddenly became well enough to take another job.

In Henderson's second season, the Thundering Herd basketball team posted a 21-8 record and tied for the conference championship. Some conference members began to grumble about "the big swing in the balance of power." The following year the football team was undefeated (9-0-1), and the basketball team went 28 and 4. Both won Buckeye Conference championships. Within a year Miami and Ohio Wesleyan withdrew, and the Buckeye Conference disbanded.

Henderson's success continued. In 12 football seasons, his record was 68-46-5, and in 20 basketball seasons, his teams won 361 games and lost 116.

Once a season Henderson would appear before the team with a handful of clippings, carefully fold and then shove them down his pants saying, "Put these in your jock strap; that's where they will do the most good."

"Much of the reason he was so successful was that he was a good judge of talent," said Herb Royer. "He didn't always recruit the big star. He could just see something in kids. He wanted tough kids

Winning

who would work hard."

"He always had small squads. That way there were no grumblers," said Ed Prelaz who played for Henderson and later became Marshall's trainer. "And he had discipline. I can remember World War II vets peeking around the side of the gym because they were afraid he would catch them doing something."

Joe Hunnicut, who played on Henderson's last basketball team said, "It was wild the way Marshall played a fast break, but it was also disciplined because everybody was in the right place. After the first time I saw them play when I was in high school, I never wanted to play for anyone but Marshall."

The high point of Henderson's career came during the 1946-47 basketball season. Marshall had a sparkling 27-5 regular season record and was subsequently invited to NAIB national small college tournament in Kansas City. Thirty-two small colleges played an almost continuous week of basketball. Marshall had only eight players because of late season injuries. The small squad and a spectacular 113-80 blowout of Washington State in the opening round established Marshall as the crowd favorite.

Marshall won two close games, a 55-54 win over Hamline College in the second round and a 56-55 squeaker over Emporia State in the semifinal. The final, however, was an easy 73-59 win over Mankato (Minn.) State.

With the National championship trophy in hand and a hard week of basketball behind them, the eight Marshall players were ready to enjoy Kansas City. But Henderson ordered them to pack immediately and hustled them to the station to catch the train home.

The following night the team arrived at the Huntington train station to find an ecstatic welcome from a crowd of 15,000. "Now this crowd tonight to me is just absolutely impossible, unbelievable. . . . This is one of the times I can't talk. Ah—in other words, my heart's so full, I have nothing to say," Henderson told the adoring crowd.

Henderson coached football at Marshall until he was 60 years old and ill with diabetes. He coached basketball for five more seasons with mixed success. Rumors in Huntington had him drinking heavily, but the truth of that was difficult to tell because his diabetes was not well controlled.

During the last game of the 1954-55 basketball season, Henderson was in an unsteady condition, and his behavior was erratic. The following week Henderson, who was 65 years old and in ill health, was forced to resign. He died a year later.

Cam Henderson is unquestionably qualified to be in the Basketball Hall of Fame. He is not for two reasons. The stages on which he performed were too small and remote from the centers of basketball, and the values he learned in the hills of rural West Virginia just wouldn't let him brag on himself.

Bob Barnett is an associate professsor in the Marshall University Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation.

Cam Henderson, circa late 1940s, when his coaching career was at its height. *Cam Henderson Papers, Special Collections Department, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, W. Va.*

Family Camping

Pennsylvania night
peered through windows
of our '34 Chevrolet,
me on the backseat serving
mosquitoes a smorgasbord
of puny arms and legs,
me hungry for sleep kept
at bay by itching poison ivy
and the wrath radiating
from all those prying eyes
of god whose daytime one
had caught me watching
Mother show her daughters
how nursing four of us
had ponderosed her breasts,
the same god lurking in shade
as I heeled through blisters
running after Dad striding
under ancient pines so tall
he needed binoculars to hear
birds twittering in their tops,
the Dad now in our tent,
his cot kept from Mother's
by three sisters sandwiched
on worn-out comforters
padding strange ground
'leventy million snake lengths
from our mid-Ohio home
where we left behind
Teddy Bear and window blinds.

— Glenn McKee

*This poem appears in **The Man From Maple Grove**, a chapbook by Nightshade Press.*

Andrew J. Kozar

And the Big Orange Caissons Went Rolling Along

R. R. NEYLAND: ENGINEER, SOLDIER, FOOTBALL COACH

When Army Captain Robert Reese Neyland became head coach at the University of Tennessee in 1926, no one could have foreseen the enormous impact he would have on the state and its people, nor how much his philosophies would influence the game of football through so many of the men who played for him.

The story was buried on Page 10 of the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* on Christmas Eve, 1931, under the headline, "Chest Gets $18,582." The money had been earned for Knoxville's Community Chest by the University of Tennessee football team 13-0 win over New York University in a charity game almost three weeks earlier.

The win over NYU completed an undefeated season. Carson Brewer, popular columnist for the *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, recently noted that the 1931 charity game "was the first thing ever to mark East Tennessee with greatness on a national scale." He emphasized his point by adding that this "greatness preceded the creation of the TVA by two years and the establishment of the Great Smokies as a national park by three years."

The UT-NYU game was viewed by 40,860 spectators and many of the country's foremost sports writers. This was only one of many non-bowl post-season football games played between 1930 and 1934 as part of a nationwide effort to raise funds for the unemployed and other charities. It and two Army-Navy games, all played in New York's Yankee Stadium, were rated in the 1990 NCAA Guide as the most notable of all benefit charity games because of media coverage and their fund-raising success.

People in the area had every reason for their pride in that 1931 team. Its members, with few exceptions, were natives of the region, and the superstars of that undefeated season were from the mountain South. Gene McEver and Beattie Feathers of Bristol, Va., and Herman Hickman, a native of Johnson City, are now enshrined in the National Football Hall of Fame. A fourth star of

(upper left)
Herman Hickman of Johnson City, Tenn., a 1931 All American as a result of his play in the 1931 season, especially in the NYU Charity game. He became head coach at Yale.

(upper right)
Bobby Dodd of Kingsport, Tenn., Neyland's great field general (1928-30) taking the snap from center, 1930. He was the first and most famous of Neyland's "coaching school" products.

(lower left)
Beattie Feathers of Bristol, Va., one of the stars of the 1931 NYU Charity Game.

(lower right)
Gene McEver of Bristol, Va., Neyland's first great running back and unquestionably Neyland's favorite football player, 1931.

Photos courtesy of Andrew J. Kozar

that team was Knoxville's Herbert "Deke" Brackett. They were all recruited, coached and led by a native Texan, Robert Reese Neyland, an Army engineer-turned-coach who was building a football dynasty at the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains.

Prior to Neyland's appointment as coach in 1926, UT football was mediocre at best. Tennessee had won only two Southern Conference titles since fielding its first team in the 1890s. Neyland, an outstanding scholar-athlete at West Point, was the architect of the University of Tennessee football program that brought acclaim to East Tennessee and engendered pride throughout the state.

Interest in football was on the rise at the University and in the Knoxville area when Army Captain R. R. Neyland, assistant professor in the University's ROTC program and end coach of its football team, was named to succeed M. Beal Banks as head coach. Neyland quickly added two fellow West Pointers — William H. Britton, end coach, and Paul Parker, interior line coach — as assistants. Thus began the Neyland Era.

After six years as coach, his record stood at 51-2-4. The two losses were a 20-3 defeat by Vanderbilt in his first season and an 18-6 defeat by Alabama in 1930. Three of the ties were against Kentucky, and each wrecked the team's chances of winning the Southern Conference championship. Some believe the 1931 stalemate with Kentucky killed an expected Rose Bowl invitation.

Neyland's success as a head coach in those first six years is incredible, considering the division of his time between university responsibilities and military assignments. His university obligations in the 1925-31 period included both football and ROTC; he also served after the football season as an engineer for the

Captain Robert Reese Neyland in his coaching uniform, 1931.

Conversation with a football vet

One of the people General R.R. Neyland influenced greatly was Andrew J. Kozar, who was a scholarship athlete on football teams coached by Neyland from 1948 to 1952. He became an All-American fullback, and true to Neyland's ideal of excellence in athletics ***and*** *academics, went on to earn a doctorate degree. Laurene Scalf talked to him about his own experience*

N&T: How did Neyland feel about academics?
Kozar: He always stressed academic work. One of the best scholarships you can get at UT is the Neyland Scholarship. It's not just for athletes. It's for all scholars. He was proud of the coaches and teachers he produced.
N&T: What would Neyland think of college football today?
Kozar: I suspect he'd be upset by the poor defense. Teams today seem to put all their best players on offense. He emphasized keeping the other team's score down and winning on fewer points. He didn't believe in throwing the ball a lot. "More bad things than good things can happen," he'd say. He liked football players who could play offense *and* defense. That's pretty much gone now.
N&T: Neyland's use of maxims — has that stuck with you? Any particular maxim of his that you live by?
Kozar: He'd say "One good blocker is worth three ball-carrying stars." If he saw one of his players hotdogging like some of these people do today, he'd have them off the field — promptly. And you wouldn't get back into the game. You practice to do what you do; you shouldn't brag about it. He tried very much to subdue the individual and emphasize the team. He'd say, "Keep your head below the log." That meant if you started thinking you were great, you started not being good for the team.
N&T: You wrote that Neyland "loved to command." How did his players react to that? How did you react?
Kozar: We were all brought up in an age of command. Our families — my family came from Yugoslavia, and I was the first generation born in America — didn't deal with you with a soft hand. The country had gone through two world wars. Having someone decisive and in charge was thought to be important. Only the quarterback talked in the huddle. Otherwise, you didn't get anything done. Somebody has to take control, lay out the plan and then rehearse and train the troops.
N&T: What were your impressions of Neyland as a person?
Kozar: He was someone people trusted because his decision was always the right medicine for whatever situation. We played in the Cotton Bowl game in '51. We were playing a bigger, good Texas team. It was raining and dreary. We left the field after the first half, wet and exhausted and a point behind. They had manhandled us. Coaches would normally walk around and talk to players during half time. But that day nobody did. Neyland finally walked into the room and said, "Men, we have these SOBs right where we want them." Well, that sure surprised us. He said, "It's raining out there. They'll fumble. They're tired. They're going to stumble." Then he commanded us to laugh. It started out forced, but it became a genuine thing. About ten years ago, I learned from an assistant coach that he had orchestrated that laughter to coincide with when the opposing team was passing by outside. He figured it would unnerve them to hear us in there laughing like that. And he was right. We won the game.

Army. The ROTC assignment ended in 1929, but he continued to split time between coaching and the Army, allowable under regulations of that day, until 1934, during which time he served the Army as district engineer, first at Chattanooga and later at Nashville.

Robert Reese Neyland was born February 17, 1892, in Greenville, Texas, to Robert R. and Pauline Lewis Neyland. He established an outstanding record in academics and athletics at Greenville High School before attending Burleson Junior College for a year. He was studying engineering at Texas A&M when, through competitive examination, he won appointment to West Point at age 20.

During his early years at the military academy, Neyland distinguished himself as an athlete earning varsity letters in three sports. He was a starter at end on the 1914-15 football team, but his greatest athletic achievements came in boxing and baseball. He was West Point's heavyweight boxing champion, 1914-16, and once won 20 consecutive games en route to a 35-5 career record as pitcher on the Academy's baseball team. He graduated near the top of his class at West Point, sharing in the top athletic award and received his second lieutenant's commission on June 4, 1916.

Neyland's initial assignment was with the First Regiment of Engineers at Brownsville, Texas, where he worked with construction and repair of levees, bridges and roads. He later trained at the First Corps Engineer School at Washington Barracks before assignment to the First Army Engineering School in France during World War I. He returned to the U.S. before the war ended, eventually taking command of the training program for the Eighth Mounted Engineers at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Later Neyland studied mechanical and electrical engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He then returned to West Point, where he served as assistant and personnel adjutant and education and recreation officer under General Douglas MacArthur, then Academy Superintendent. Neyland described MacArthur as ". . . the nonpareil, who was unquestionably the greatest officer and man I ever knew. His incredible ability dwarfed all others by comparison."

Neyland absorbed and later expanded MacArthur's views on the significance of exercise and sports for cadets at the Academy. He employed many of these lessons for the first time while serving as an assistant football coach during his Academy tenure. After coming to Tennessee in 1925, he combined this experience with the West Point spirit to build one of the most respected football programs in America.

Gene McEver, Quinn Decker and Beattie Feathers (who became head coach at North Carolina State), all veterans of the 1931 Charity Game team, and their 1930 teammate, Bobby Dodd (who became head coach at Georgia Tech) at a Knoxville Quarterback Club function, September 1975.

It was evident to anyone observing his relationship with athletes, whether in 1926 or 1952, that Neyland loved to command, whether in a military uniform or coaching togs. Neyland's personal notebook entries in 1926 filled only eight pages, but they reveal much about the man, showing him as a "commander-in-chief," plotting the season, setting a pattern he would follow throughout his coaching career.

Several pages of those entries dealt with team maxims, some borrowed from his Army coach, Charles Dudley Day, and military-type verse from Rudyard Kipling, Marshal Ferdinand Foch and others. All were applicable to football and outlined a path for team victory — "defeat of the enemy's forces," the first principle for war. Neyland applied these "team maxims" throughout his coaching career, and his former players can remember and quote them today.

The coach stressed team effort as the key to winning games and often cited this bit of verse to keep the value of teamwork uppermost in the minds of his players:

It's not the guns or the armament,
Or the money they can pay;
It's the close cooperation
That makes them win the Day.
It's not the individual
Or the army as a whole,
But the everlasting teamwork
Of every blooming soul.

Coaching success can be measured in many ways. The most commonly used yardstick for success has always been a coach's win-loss record. Using that standard, Neyland's 21-year figures are amazing. He won 32 of his last 37 games as a head coach, to bring his career total to 173 wins, 31 losses, and 12 ties.

Neyland's greatest achievement, perhaps, is evident in the number of his players who later became head football coaches, many in high schools in the mountain South and in major college programs across the country. Best known of this latter group was the late Bobby Dodd, a native of Kingsport, Tenn., "field general" of Neyland's 1928-30 teams and a coaching legend in his own right at Georgia Tech. Through these men, Neyland's strong, martial approach has affected the game of football well beyond the mountain ridges of East Tennessee.

In an unpublished autobiographical manuscript, Neyland noted, "I am a Texan by birth, born of native Texans, and cherish the Texas belief that there is no place in the world to equal Texas." He may have been a Texan by birth, but his influence on the mountain South through long and outstanding leadership in Tennessee has been profound and permanent. The words "Neyland" and "Tennessee" have become inexorably linked for all time.

Andrew J. Kozar is a professor in the department of Human Performance and Sport Studies at the University of Tennessee.

Sabbath Sin (continued from page 12)

remarked in his University of Tennessee football history, the good soldier carried out the order by going on to compile a record of 16-3-2 against Vanderbilt. Part of Neyland's appeal to common folk in Tennessee lay in his toppling from power the old aristocratic order in football represented by Vanderbilt and Sewanee.

What Yost was to offense, Neyland was to defense. His defensive record is legendary as the NCAA record book of 1989 demonstrates: (1) Most consecutive regular season shutouts (17 in 1938-40), (2) Most consecutive regular season quarters holding opponents scoreless (71 in 1938-40), (3) Fewest points allowed in a single season (none in 1939 — shared with others), and (4) The last team to hold opposition scoreless during regular season.

Part of Neyland's appeal to common folk in Tennessee lay in his toppling from power the old aristocratic order in football represented by Vanderbilt and Sewanee.

Neyland's success can be measured in other ways as well. Neyland Stadium, which during every home game becomes in terms of population the fifth largest city in Tennessee, may be called "the House the General built." When Neyland first came to Tennessee, the stadium had 3,200 seats. Neyland oversaw expansion to a capacity of 46,390. Using Neyland's grand design, said Bob Gilbert, athletic directors Bob Woodruff and Doug Dickey enlarged the stadium to accommodate 96,000 fans. Neyland's ultimate plan, a double-decked bowl, called for 103,00 seats, which would have made it the largest college stadium in the country, larger than the one at Ann Arbor. In addition to expanding the stadium, Neyland produced coaches in power football. Here, too, he achieved undreamed of results, relying primarily on local talent. Scores of those who played under Neyland became coaches.

Also like Yost, Neyland was involved in controversy centering on the apparent conflict between his duties as an Army engineer on the Tennessee River and those of coaching. The issues reached a head in 1933 when Franklin Roosevelt dismissed Neyland as Chattanooga District Engineer. The problem concerned alleged and complicated transfer of electric power by the Alabama Power Company and the Tennessee Power Company through Wilson Dam in Muscle Shoals, all under the auspices of the Army Engineers. Just as the University of Michigan stood by Yost, Major General Lytle Brown, head of the Army Engineers, defended Neyland and his subordinates. No charges were brought, says Gilbert, but Neyland, born a Texas Democrat, never forgot how he was treated by the New Deal. After his retirement from the Army as a brigadier general after World War II, he denounced in the strongest language Roosevelt and the New Deal, opposing strenuously "social concepts which put the federal government in business competition with private industry."

Yost and Neyland demonstrated, on the one hand, that Appalachians can coach with the best and, on the other, play with the best. However one feels about the role of these legends in the development of college football, their brilliance and versatility must be acknowledged.
Yet the careers of these two legendary coaches raise several questions when we compare modern sports in the region with those of the 19th century: Were Yost and Neyland the last of the all-round men who tried to combine professional interests or obligations outside of football with their jobs as head coaches? Did they with their emphasis upon precision and machine-like efficiency ironically make football so demanding in the United States that coaches and, *more important*, players themselves have little time left for other things, including studies and preparation for a career outside of sports? To what extent is the situation paralleled in Appalachia? Are we producing great scholars and scientists on the same scale as we are coaches and athletes? Is running up the score for ranking the modern equivalent of the excessive killing of game for record in the 19th century? Is "winning-is-the-only-thing" a modern version of the rough and tumble in which the goal was to win by any means available? What has happened to the simple fun of play as sports, especially football, have been progressively imbued with military and religious seriousness?

In responding to these questions, we might remember an alternative to Yost's "winning is the only thing," and that is the cliché of Grantland Rice, a native Tennessean, that expresses an entirely opposite view: "And when the one great scorer comes to mark against your name / He says not that you won or lost, but how you played the game." This may be read in the way that Rice probably intended, as an affirmation of traditional faith, and it may be viewed less theologically as a common sense view of competition.

According to George Leonard, blacks in Buffalo expressed something of Rice's philosophy when they asked after a Bills game not whether the Bills won or lost but this: "Did O.J. dance?" That is always the final question, if not the first, not what was the score but "how was the dance?"

The direction that sports in Appalachia will take in the future will depend in large measure on the questions we ask. Only by looking both at the old ways and the new can we seek the best. Our alternatives, after all, are not between the rough and tumble on the one hand or football as war and religion on the other.

A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and former football player, Robert H. (Jack) Higgs has spent a number of years writing about the connections between sports, militarism and religion. He teaches English at East Tennessee State University and is co-author of the widely used Appalachian Studies text, ***Voices From the Hills****.*

Reviews

Neyland: The Gridiron General

by Bob Gilbert

Golden Coast Publishing Company
22 Waite Drive
Savannah GA 31406
1990
$21.00 (hardback)

In his race for the White House in 1968, Eugene McCarthy drew a parallel between politicians seeking office and football coaches. "You have to be smart enough to understand the game," he said, "and dumb enough to think it matters." While one may laugh at the humor of McCarthy, the truth is that he was wrong on the importance of football in American culture. The same is true of politics. What often seems trivial and comical during a fall campaign may later profoundly affect our lives. Football and politics are two arenas where the playful and the serious constantly interfuse.

One who never doubted for a moment the importance of football was Robert Reese Neyland Jr., celebrated head coach at the University of Tennessee for 21 years during the period 1926 to 1952, excluding periods of military duty. Neyland's achievements, set forth in Bob Gilbert's engaging and informative biography, give ample testimony to the values Neyland attached to football and to his unusual knowledge of the game, as well of course to his skill as a coach. At the time of his death in 1962, Neyland had the best won-lost record of any coach with 20 years or more of coaching, 173-31-2. During the 12 years he coached after the Associated Press began its poll, Neyland's Tennessee teams finished eighth or higher seven times and won the AP National Championship in 1951. Tennessee's opponents were held scoreless 106 times in the 173 games Neyland won, and eight of his 21 teams were undefeated.

To his credit, Bob Gilbert, director of the news operations for the University of Tennessee and columnist for the Maryville *Daily Times* since 1969, does more than repeat the Neyland record and strategy for winning football. While most of the book is concerned with Neyland as Tennessee coach, Gilbert also follows him from his youth in Greenville, Texas, through his years at West Point, where Neyland was a brilliant athlete. The author also covers Neyland's military assignments, including a tour in France in World War I and one in the China-Burma-India Theater in World War II as a logistics officer in charge of moving supplies to various allied units in Asia, a task for which he was decorated by the British, U.S. and Chinese governments.

In his presentation of facts, Gilbert wins the reader's confidence early. A long and impressive list of acknowledgments of those assisting Gilbert in some way, including Neyland's family and sports historian Andy Kozar, who was an All-American fullback under Neyland, lends further credibility to the book. Gilbert also draws upon a 30,000 word manuscript written by Neyland himself.

A slight tone of hagiography hovers over Gilbert's narrative, but this is excusable and maybe even expected in any UT sports fan such as Gilbert, who lived through the Neyland era. Gilbert seeks neither to polish nor to tarnish the Neyland legend. His main intent is to put a factual foundation under it for better viewing of the man and legend. In this endeavor he has succeeded admirably and made a significant contribution to a deeper understanding of sports in East Tennessee and the individuals who brought them into prominence.

Neyland was both a major head coach and officer in the Army Corps of Engineers. While there may well be meaningful parallels between football and engineering, as Neyland believed, it was difficult to combine the two careers as he repeatedly discovered. Until his first retirement from the service in 1936, Neyland was frequently in the center of controversy, sometimes political in nature, regarding the perceived conflict between his duties as an engineer on the Tennessee River and the challenge facing him as a coach building a football dynasty. The dilemma Neyland faced was captured in a cartoon in the Nashville Tennessean in 1936 with these words: "Illustrious Nashville citizen, who as one of Uncle Sam's Army engineers, spends most of his time working to help mariners run over the Tennessee River, and the rest of his time working to prevent anybody (especially Commodores) from running over his Tennessee football team." One of the reasons he had been brought to Knoxville was to even the series with powerful Vanderbilt, the other to fulfill his duties as an instructor in ROTC and an officer in the Corps of Engineers. He could not do battle on so many fronts without growing criticism. Neyland's efforts to balance the demands of the Army on the one hand and major college football on the other anticipated the ongoing conflict between championship football and academic endeavor.

Gilbert does not tell us just why Neyland thought football so important. The reasons have to be inferred. To Neyland, life seemed more of a challenge to be confronted than a mystery to be experienced. "To defeat a weak opponent is not the problem." he said. "The problem is to win when he is as good or better than you." Football, presumably, was the one way for young men to discover what Neyland called "the first rule of life": "Don't kid yourself," which seems almost a sporting version of Socrates' "Know Thyself," a dictum that requires neither manliness nor competition as a way to self-knowledge. To what extent football, and perhaps even war, is a manufactured challenge each can decide, but few met challenges with more skill and resolve than Robert Reese Neyland, a brilliant, complex man who radically altered the sports scene of East Tennessee and the entire South.

— Robert J. Higgs

Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules, and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words, it is war minus the shooting.

—George Orwell (1903-1950)

Could it be that in describing the odd phenomenon of twentieth-century international sport as 'war minus the shooting', Orwell was producing, not a condemnation as he thought, but its ultimate justification?

— Philip Goodhardt, M.P. & Christopher Chataway, 1968

Reviews

HELLO EVERYBODY, This is Cawood Ledford

by Cawood Ledford

as told to Billy Reed
Host Creative Communications
904 North Broadway
Lexington KY 40505
1992
$21.95 (hardback)

His was one of the most recognizable voices on Kentucky radio and television. Cawood Ledford *was* the Voice of the Wildcats. He announced all of the University of Kentucky men's basketball and football games since 1953, when he left radio station WHLN in his native Harlan County to work at WLEX in Lexington. He moved to WHAS in Louisville in 1956 and 11 years later became UK's exclusive play-by-play man. In 1979 he moved back to Lexington and formed his own company, Cawood Ledford Productions. At the end of the 1991-92 season, the Voice signed off for good.

If you can't say something nice don't say anything at all, goes the old adage. Ledford might counter that with "Say what you want, but say it nicely." In this autobiography, a farewell to a distinguished 39-year career, he says plenty about the people with and for whom he has worked as the premier sportscaster in Big Blue country. He doesn't gloss over the arrogant, sometimes cruel, side of University of Kentucky basketball coaching legend Adolph Rupp, but also tells how honored he felt to be working with a coach of Rupp's caliber. This seems less a matter of ambivalence than of the balanced professionalism for which Ledford is well known by the public and within the sportscasting industry.

That professionalism drew the ire of football coach Charlie Bradshaw during a losing 1967 season. Ledford recounts Bradshaw's accusation that he had been negative toward the Wildcats during a recent game.

"'When you get beat 48-7,' I told him, 'I don't have the talent to make you sound good.'

"I told Charlie that I couldn't be against Kentucky and that I hoped the Wildcats won every year. I told him I just couldn't get into calling Kentucky 'we' and the other team 'they.' He wanted to know why not. There was nothing more to say."

Bradshaw's attitude is not so surprising in light of the fact that schools formerly spent far less money on their sports information departments than they do now and depended upon local reporters to serve as public relations functionaries. Both the school and the fans felt betrayed, therefore, when in 1954 Larry Boeck of *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville pointed out that the three star players on that year's undefeated Wildcat basketball team would be ineligible, as fifth-year graduate students, to play in the NCAA Tournament. "When Boeck broke the story," writes Ledford, "a lot of UK people considered it a traitorous act. I'd say that was the beginning of the antagonism between UK and *The Courier-Journal*."

A more embarrassing story broke in 1988 when a basketball coaching assistant was accused of paying $1000 to the father of a top recruit. Then-president David Roselle hired an investigator and gave him full access to UK's records. Allegations multiplied and TV commentator Dick Vitale called for the resignation of Coach Eddie Sutton. Ledford then castigated Vitale on television. His animosity toward Vitale, Ledford explains, arose from the fact that no charges had been proven as yet when Vitale made his statement. That, says Ledford, was unfair. The resulting ill will between him and Vitale, later resolved, is uncharacteristic of Ledford's relationships with others in the profession.

The book is co-written by Billy Reed, a senior writer at *Sports Illustrated*, who also garnered some animosity over the years from Wildcat fans who took exception to things he has written about UK in *The Courier-Journal* and in *Sports Illustrated*. "I've known Billy a long time," Ledford said in an interview (See page 21). "We're good friends and I respect his work. I called him and asked him to work on this project with me. And I've been delighted with the results."

No less apparent than his respect for fairness is Ledford's love for the games he brought to life for radio audiences. He recalls particular games in such vivid, active detail that he holds the reader in suspense even when she or he already knows the outcome. He covers each season since 1953-54, providing anecdotes and analyses and character sketches of coaches and players. He also looks at campus politics involved whenever a coach left — either willingly (Bear Bryant) or unwillingly (Fran Curci).

During Ledford's career, American collegiate sports underwent the turbulent and arguably still incomplete process of integration, but he gives the issue disappointingly cursory treatment. He writes of UK's loss of the NCAA title to Texas Western in 1966: "Later, a lot of sports writers made a big deal out of the fact that an all-black team had defeated an all-white team, but that wasn't much of an issue at the time." The time was just two years after passage of the Civil Rights Act; it seems unlikely that the victory of a black team over a solid bastion of white basketball like the University of Kentucky was not an issue. UK broke its color barrier in basketball in 1969 with Tom Payne, a seven-footer from Shawnee High in Louisville. He made all-Southeastern Conference in a single season at UK before going professional with the Atlanta Hawks. Payne was the only black to play for Adolph Rupp, who was forced to retire in 1972 at the mandatory age of 70, after 42 years of coaching at UK.

Rupp declined to name his top players of all time. Ledford is less reticent. An appendix of lists includes Top 10 UK Basketball Players, Unsung Heroes, Sixth Men, Best UK Football Players and even Best SEC Restaurants.

College sports fans will enjoy this book. UK fans will love it. But you don't have to be either to find interesting the career of the man Dick Stockton of CBS Sports calls "only the best basketball play-by-play man that ever was."

— Laurene Scalf

True disputants are like true sportsmen, their whole delight is in the pursuit.

— Alexander Pope, 1741

Reviews

AETHLON: The Journal of Sport Literature

edited by Don Johnson

East Tennessee State Univ. Press
for Sport Literature Association
Subscriptions: $24 institutions,
$14 individuals
Orders: Lyle Olson, Dept. of English
ETSU, Box 70683
Johnson City TN 37614-0683

It looks and feels more like brain than brawn: thick, printed on good, creamy stock and with an elegant logo — a stylized ship from the early Greek era — on the brown cover. The overleaf of the frontispiece offers an explanation of the title:

"Aethlon (**ath**-*lon*): the original form of the Greek word meaning 'prize of the contest; reward, recompense.' We like to think of it as also including the notion of the contest or struggle itself (*aethlos*), and skill or excellence (*arete*) that wins the prize."

Aethlon gives the lie to the notion that brain and brawn don't mix, that the world is divided into puddingheaded jocks on one hand and physically weak eggheads, who scorn them, on the other. Published biannually by East Tennessee State University Press for the Sport Literature Association and edited by ETSU English professor, Don Johnson, *Aethlon* includes poems, essays, book reviews and short fiction about sports.

The essays appeal to the lit crit crowd, covering the theme of wildness in the works of Thomas Wentworth Higginson (best known as Emily Dickinson's pen pal) or the motif of dark bars versus clean, well-lighted places in sports film and literature.

Many of the poems are verbal videos that freeze frame on those breathless moments of perfection that make sports so exhilarating: the point at which a diver's toes and fingers meet during a jackknife, the upward curve of a bungee jumper's arc, a player's hands closing upon a flying basketball.

The short stories portray athletes and would-be athletes dealing with human relationships within and outside sports, dribbling through a humdrum existence, pitching woo, racing against time, crawl stroking through a slough of despond.

The idea of well-integrated brain and brawn is not new. Everyone who took Latin in high school remembers *mens sana in corpore sano*. But *Aethlon* differs from even the most thoughtful newsstand sports publications in that brain flexing is not just recommended, it's required. And no, there's no swimsuit issue.

— Laurene Scalf

A History of Sports in North Carolina

by Jim L. Sumner

North Carolina Department
of Cultural Resources
Division of Archives and History
109 East Jones Street
Raleigh NC 27601-2807
1990
$6.00 (paperback)

Publications about sports in a particular state or region are often little more than brag books. Records achieved by the region's athletic stars (usually male, frequently white) in the Big Three sports — football, baseball and basketball — are avidly listed. Little attention is paid to other sports, to women or to the deeper connection of sports to the region's political and social structure. This is because most of these books are written by sports fans.

Enter Jim L. Sumner, sports fan *and* historian. In this historical play-by-play, he traces the development of sports in North Carolina alongside the development of the state from agrarian, participation-centered colonial days to the technological, spectation-centered present.

A recurring theme of the book is the effect of war on sports. The Wilmington Jockey Club was formed in 1774 but did not hold races that year. The Continental Congress, in view of continuing unstable relations with England, had requested that patriots forego expensive pleasures. The Wilmington Committee of Safety pressured the initially unresponsive Jockey Club into complying with the request. The Civil War permanently lamed the horse racing industry in the South. Horses were taken for use in battle, and many of the large antebellum plantations, where race horses were bred, were destroyed. The desire for escapism following World War I led to the idolization of sports figures and the Age of the Spectator. World War II left spectators with less sports to watch as many athletes traded team uniforms for service uniforms. The degree to which the Second World War exceeded the first in virulence was reflected in the avidity with which sports were embraced by the American public after the war.

Women's professional baseball, introduced in the early 1940s to fill the gap left by male players who had gone to war, died of neglect after the men came home. Sumner charts women's participation in sports from that of infrequent spectator in the colonial period to the foundation of sports scholarships for women after passage in 1972 of Title IX of the Education Amendment Act, which proscribed sex discrimination in sports by an institution which received federal funds. Active participation by women began noticeably in the late 19th century as upper class women filled leisure time with croquet and tennis, albeit in a non-competitive and ladylike fashion. After women became more competitive in these sports, as well as in gymnastics, golf and track events, the public still preferred to see women compete as single athletes rather than as part of a team. Even in women's colleges, team competitions were most often intramural.

The public preferred to see non-whites compete not at all. Slaves, generally accorded some recreation time on weekends, fished and hunted (a limited number were permitted to use guns) for sport as well as to augment the family larder. Slaves competed in foot racing and wrestling, but such contests were usually not attended by whites. Whites did make use of blacks as gamekeepers in cockfighting and as jockeys and trainers in horse racing. Black team sports began with the formation of informal baseball teams in the late 1800s. Rocky Mount, N.C., was the birthplace of Walter "Buck" Leonard, who became known as "the black Lou Gehrig" in the Negro Leagues in the 1930s and early 1940s. He was inducted into the baseball Hall of Fame in 1972.

Reviews

Integration came more quickly to professional sports (1940s and 1950s) than to collegiate sports (late 1950s). Some white universities held out until well into the 1960s. Though their teams have become more integrated, predominantly white universities still have hired few black coaches or administrators.

Native Americans have been even less visible in North Carolina sports history. Natives and white settlers rarely competed against one another, partly because Indian games were highly ritualized and had religious significance to the tribe. (See article on page .) The most famous Native American to play in North Carolina was Jim Thorpe, a Pennsylvanian who played in the state's baseball minor leagues in 1909 and 1910. After Thorpe won the decathlon at the 1912 Olympics, his professional stint in North Carolina was unearthed. He was forced to give up his gold medal and barred from competing as an amateur.

The flash and noise in Barcelona this past summer, seen via satellite around the world, testified that the Olympics, like all sports, have been changed by technology in the 80 years since Thorpe competed. The standardization of sports through technology got a running start after the Civil War when increased rail transportation made sports more accessible. Local teams could play in towns previously thought too far away. The laying of a national telegraphic network and the creation of the Associated Press allowed newspapers to carry sports information from the rest of the country. Rules became standardized and record keeping became important, fostering the fans' mania for statistics and sports trivia.

Sumner does not let this mania go unfed. He gives ample space to the exploits of individual professional and collegiate athletes, including those in the less popular (and less generously funded) sports like tennis and track and field. A reader's whistle over an admirable statistic, however, does not exceed in enthusiasm the reader's expression of wonder, amusement and sometimes repulsion over this intriguing, well illustrated look at one state's social history through its sports.

— Laurene Scalf

Highland Trails: A Guide to Scenic Walking and Riding Trails — Northeast Tennessee, Western North Carolina, Southwest Virginia

Revised Edition with New Trails

Kenneth Murray

The Overmountain Press
PO Box 1261
Johnson City TN 37605
1992
$10.95 (paperback)

Walking the Blue Ridge

A Guide to the Trails of the Blue Ridge Parkway

Leonard M. Adkins

University of North Carolina Press
PO Box 2288
Chapel Hill NC 27515-2288
1991
$11.95 (paperback)

Those who enjoy walking in the Southern mountains will want to own two recently published guides to trails. Photographer Kenneth Murray's guide is a revised edition with 50 more pages of his *Highland Trails of Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia* published in 1987 and out of print for some time. Most of the trails he describes are in the Mount Rogers area of Southwest Virginia and in the Cherokee National Forest in East Tennessee. *Highland Trails* is illustrated generously with Murray's excellent photos of the waterfalls and other wonders of the region (though the printing of the pictures in this edition could be better). Many of the trails he describes are not well marked, so visitors and newcomers will appreciate his generally reasonable directions. Those familiar with the area will undoubtedly find new trails to explore in this guide.

Walking the Blue Ridge has a somewhat simpler task, describing generally well-maintained trails, all of which are accessible from the magnificent Blue Ridge Parkway, the 469-mile scenic highway along the spine of the mountains of Virginia and North Carolina. On some, surfaces have been leveled and even paved, and there are handrails and platforms for viewing such beautiful sights as Linville Falls.

Both guides include sections of the Appalachian Trail, the hiking path that extends from Maine to Georgia. Both also include ratings of difficulty. The authors' judgments are quite different from each other. Occasional hikers might find the *Blue Ridge* "moderates" pretty easy and the *Highland Trails* "moderates" rather taxing.

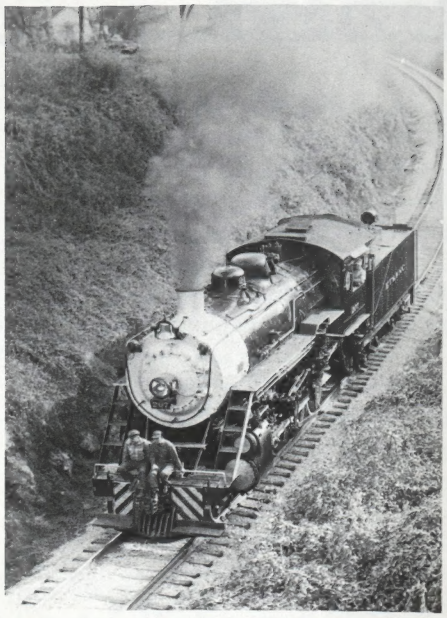
Murray, in describing the rougher, infrequently traveled paths in *Highland Trails*, also has a more casual approach: "With luck, yellow painted blazes will be spotted on trees as the stream begins to feather out. Should the path be lost, just head for the crest, traveling south, and the gravel road will soon be intersected." By contrast, a description in *Walking the Blue Ridge* includes: ".6 (mile) Arrive at a bench under a birch tree. .7 Another bench."

The Blue Ridge Parkway has more than 25 million visitors annually. Thus, many of the trails described in *Walking the Blue Ridge* are crowded with people, especially on weekends in the summer and fall. Hikers wishing to avoid people and the noise of traffic can either opt for the more lengthy hikes described in the guide, which are less crowded, or turn to Ken Murray's guide. Even on the most beautiful weekend days of the year, hikers who venture on the trails described in *Highland Trails* will encounter few other souls. But *Walking the Blue Ridge* gives directions, descriptions and history of some of the most spectacular scenic spots in the region. Both guides will be an often-used part of every Southern Appalachian walker's library.

—Pat Arnow

The woods are made for the hunters of dreams,
The brooks for the fishers of song;
To the hunters who hunt for the gunless game
The streams and the woods belong.
—Sam Walter Foss (1858-1911)

Music



ET&WNC, Dowdy Collection - Archives of Appalachia

"A Race Between a Bike and a Train" was written by Southwest Virginia native Joe Carter. Joe said he already had the melody for the song in his head while he came up with the idea for the story. The song is sung *a cappella* to an old Civil War song, "The Battle at Shiloh Hill."

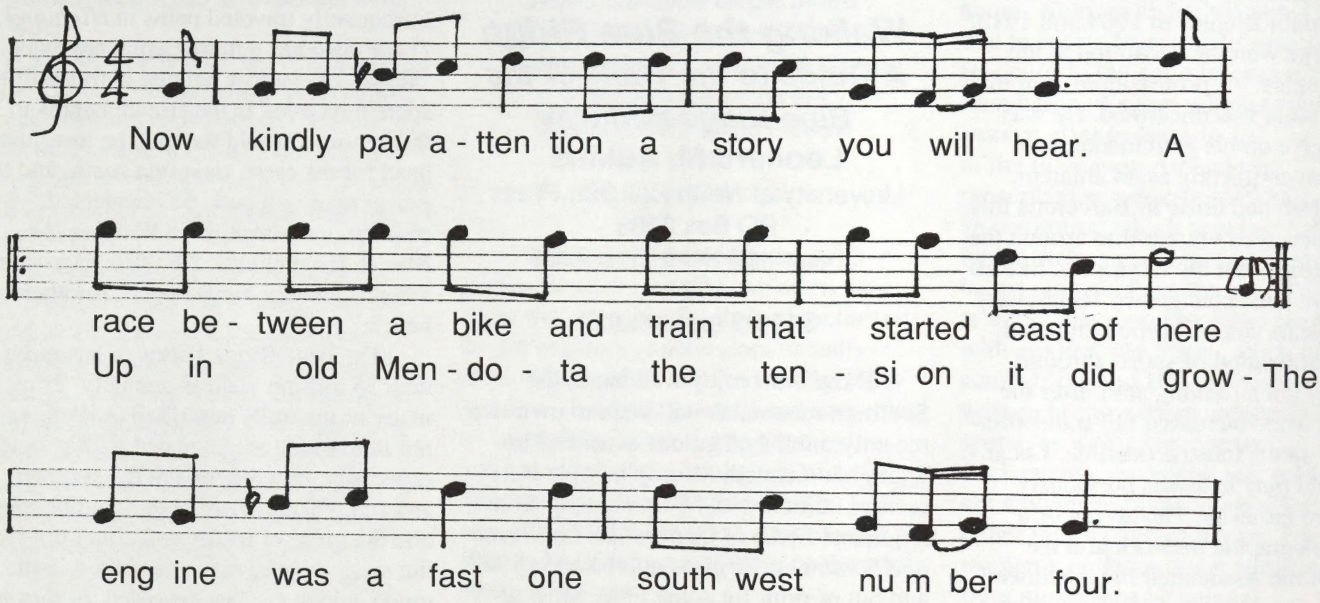
I asked Joe if he remembered his father, A.P. Carter, roaming around the house working on songs. Joe said that on several occasions he heard his Dad singing the melody to a tune while still working and crafting the words.

Joe and his sister Janette keep the old music alive every Saturday night at the A.P. Carter Fold in Hiltons, Va. Next time you're there, you might ask Joe to sing this song.

— Ed Snodderly

RACE BETWEEN A BIKE AND A TRAIN

by Joe Carter


Now kindly pay a - tten tion a story you will hear. A
race be - tween a bike and train that started east of here
Up in old Men - do - ta the ten - si on it did grow - The
eng ine was a fast one south west nu m ber four.

Mounted on a 10 speed you're looking at him here
So confident that I would win, I bet a case of beer.
Twelve miles down to Hiltons would be the finish line
It was almost 1 o'clock and I was feeling fine

The whistle was the signal the race was really on
The black smoke started rolling, old No. 4 did groan
I was peeling rubber man laying down a strip
5th gear was coming up, I heard my britches rip.

One part of me was running cool, the rest was running hot
By then I knew I should have ate more beans out of the pot
Halfway now and side by side, Old Barker watched me sweat
He was the dirty engineer that covered all my bet

Old No. 4 was rolling, moving like a breeze
Her stack was blowing acorns from the tallest trees.
I still had 3 more gears to go, I'm reaching now for 8
Down hill for one half mile, then Mt. Vernon straight

Mace Springs then daddy's store was coming in my view
When I passed the Millards the peacock feathers flew
Old No.4 was holding not 30 feet behind
When I topped the mossy bump I shifted up to 9.

I was still determined that I was going to win
The next one was the big cog and that was number 10
The finish line was just ahead, seconds minutes fewer
Ernest Dirting hollered out to throw the carbide to her

Well I did, and then the skid, people look and doubt
How a man with handlebars could clean such fence row out.
I started tasting sassafras the post and staples flew
I grabbed some yellow locusts and wild, wild cherries too

It must have been the creek bank that gave me such a spin
I stopped in only inches of what it took to win
I was a-crawling just feeling for my brain
I heard the voices yelling loud, old big Joe beat that train.

1985 Jimmie Skinner Music, BMI.

It was a long time before I admitted I loved baseball

Coalfield baseball, 1921

Storming Heaven *was Denise Giardina's 1987 novel based on coalfield history in West Virginia. The book culminates with one of the bloodiest incidents in labor history in the United States, the Battle of Blair Mountain. During the last two weeks of August 1921, 10,000 armed coal miners faced sheriff's deputies, coal company mercenaries and the federal government's supply of bombs, guns and poison gas. Dozens of miners died. Many more were injured, and the fledgling union movement was crippled.*

Various fictional characters tell the true story of the terrible conditions that led to the confrontation. They also describe life at the time. One of them, C.J. Marcum, tells about another piece of coalfield history — the development of coal company baseball teams:

The coal operators started the baseball leagues. I heard tell of baseball, but I never paid it much mind before that.

Davidson had a team, and Felco, Carbon, Chieftan, and Vulcan. They was a separate league for Negro miners. I thought baseball was silly, even wrote an editorial saying so in the Free Press. Every Sunday in the summertime, the miners and their families went to the ballfields. You couldn't never get that many of them out to talk about something serious, like politics. And yet, when it come time to swat a little white ball, there they'd all be. Even worse, the baseball games caused the miners to turn on each other instead of cooperating. The Vulcan miners despised Carbon, Carbon detested Felco, they all hated Davidson, which usually had the best team.

"You think the operators dont know that?" I wrote. "They love to see the miner fill his head with such foolishness. They love to see him fret about anything except who will control the mines."

Isom had kept after me to play. "Big as you are, I bet you could hit a few homers."

"Ifn I wanted to," I replied. I thought baseball was beneath me. But I went to the home games anyway. I was elected mayor in 1915 and it was my duty to attend all such civic functions. That's what I told myself. It was a long time before I admitted I loved baseball.

They give me number 33, a gray flannel uniform trimmed in red. We are the Annadel Redlegs, named after Cincinnati. My first year in the Independent League I hit twenty-five homers. Little boys followed me around town, and I'd set them down and tell them about how the coal companies stole the land.

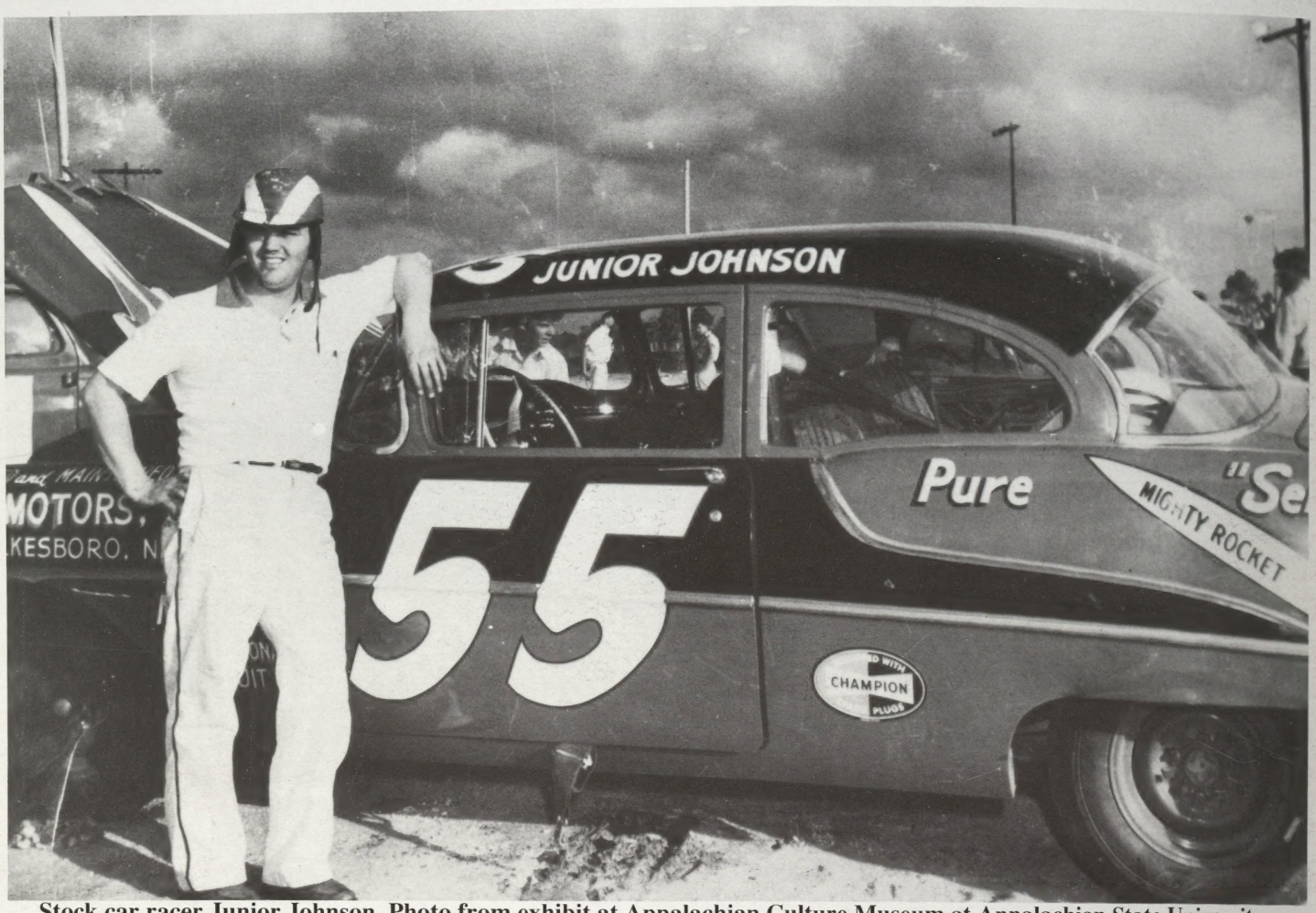
A Davidson miner who played ball got special treatment, like outside work or a foreman's job down in the mine. Mario Angelelli, the legendary Davidson shortstop, had not seen the inside of a coal mine in ten year, and his son, Carmello, the second baseman, was a section boss even though he was only eighteen.

The main reason Davidson didn't want to play us was politics. Like all the coal operators, Lytton Davidson hated Annadel. "Redlegs" was too tame a name for us, he said, because we was red right up to the tops of our heads. Besides that, it was humiliating to see Negroes and white men playing on the same team, and to risk seeing white men beat by coloreds.

Excerpted with permission from Denise Giardina.

Photo by Russell Lee, 1946. Courtesy of National Archives.

My first year in the Independent League I hit 25 homers. Little boys followed me around town, and I'd set them down and tell them about how the coal companies stole the land.



Stock car racer Junior Johnson. Photo from exhibit at Appalachian Culture Museum at Appalachian State University.

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